A MIXED METHOD STUDY TO MEASURE OUTCOMES FROM CO-CURRICULAR SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology and Individual Differences

by

Ryan MacLelland Griswold

August 2013

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Abstract

This study focused on the outcomes achieved by students participating in a co-curricular service-learning experience, specifically alternative spring break trips. Both curricular and co-curricular service learning are part of a larger field of experiential learning, which has been found to have positive influences on student learning and development. While learning outcomes for curricular service learning have been identified in numerous empirical studies, a literature review identifies a gap in research related to learning outcomes from co-curricular service learning programs.

The goal of this study was to examine the outcomes achieved by participants using the *Alternative Break Participant Survey* (*ABPS*). This instrument examines three constructs relevant to the learning achieved through participation in co-curricular service-learning experiences: faith, knowledge, and commitment.

Guiding this inquiry were the following research questions:

1. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience?
2. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to

faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience?

3. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)?
4. What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants?

This study utilized archival data collected part of an institutional program evaluation process. Data were collected both through on-line surveys with a sample of undergraduate students who had applied to participate in an alternative break program (N = 116) and through a series of three focus group interviews (N = 5, 6, and 5).

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were utilized to answer each of the first three research questions. Qualitative data from focus group interviews were examined through the use of NVivo in order to answer the fourth research question and provide additional support for questions one through three.

Significant findings in the MANOVA tests for the pre-trip component of the program suggested that students' faith development is influenced by their past involvement in similar programs (F (3, 28) = 3.56; Pillai's Trace = .28), as well as by interactions between gender and prior level of service involvement (F (6, 58) = 2.46; Pillai's Trace = .41) and past involvement in similar programs and prior level of service

involvement (F (6, 58) = 3.09; Pillai's Trace = .49). Additional significant MANOVA findings from the trip component of the program (F (3, 24) = 4.02; Pillai's Trace = .33) indicate students experience outcomes associated with their commitment to take action and knowledge. These outcomes are influenced by a combination of gender and past involvement in similar programs. With respect to outcomes from the entire program, survey results indicated that none of the independent variables influenced outcomes associated with *ABPS* constructs. The focus group interviews supported these findings for faith development, but made a strong case for changes in students' commitment to take action and understanding and application of community-based knowledge. Finally, the data affirmed that there are additional constructs beyond those measured by the *ABPS* that impact student learning and development, particularly as experiences related to students' understanding of communities and social issues.

Keywords: co-curricular service learning service-learning alternative breaks faith commitment academic learning development outcomes

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

This study focused on the learning and development outcomes achieved by students participating in a co-curricular service-learning experience, specifically an alternative spring break trip. Both curricular and co-curricular service learning, two similar pedagogies of teaching, are part of a larger field of experiential learning, which has been found to have positive influences on student learning and development. Through the application of a common framework for both pedagogies, which utilizes elements of service, education, and reflection, it was hypothesized that similar results could be achieved with the two different approaches. While learning outcomes for curricular service learning have been identified in numerous empirical studies (e.g. Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Fricker, Geschwind, Gray, & Ondaatje, 2000), a literature review identified a gap in research related to learning outcomes from co-curricular service learning programs.

The goal of this study was to examine the outcomes achieved by participants through the use of a validated instrument, the *Alternative Break Participant Survey* (*ABPS*). This instrument examines three constructs relevant to the learning achieved through participation in co-curricular service-learning experiences: "Faith in Action through Service," "Knowledge in Action through Service," and "Commitment in Action through Service."

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Institutions of higher education, faculty, students, and community partners would benefit from empirical evidence that demonstrates the extent to which co-curricular

service-learning can achieve any or all of the same learning or developmental outcomes as curricular service-learning. For example, colleges and universities could more effectively report the achievement of learning outcomes to accrediting agencies; students could more effectively guide some of their own learning experiences; and non-profit partners could co-develop service activities that truly meet both community and student needs.

To obtain this evidence, a validated instrument capable of measuring the outcomes from co-curricular service-learning experiences was used as part of a program evaluation process to examine three specific constructs: "Faith in Action through Service," "Knowledge in Action through Service," and "Commitment in Action through Service."

Guiding this inquiry were the following research questions:

1. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience?
2. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience?

3. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)?
4. What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants?

To answer these questions, this study utilized archival data collected by the civic engagement department of a small, private, secular, urban, research-intensive university. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data that were collected as part of a program evaluation process at that institution. Quantitative data were collected through three on-line surveys with a sample of undergraduate students who had applied to participate in an alternative break program. Qualitative data were collected through a series of three focus group interviews that had one common question and three questions specific to the studied constructs.

It was anticipated that the pre-trip education, as well as the on-site service, education, and reflection, would yield positive developmental results along each of the instrument's sub-scales. Additionally, the study examined any moderation effect caused by participant gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, or past level of service involvement.

With respect to the qualitative portion of the study, it was anticipated that the focus group interviews would provide additional support for the learning achieved by study participants along the three identified constructs measured by the *ABPS*.

Additionally, the focus group interviews were anticipated to provide insights into other learning outcomes identified in the literature, but not measured by the *ABPS*, including intercultural competence, personal efficacy, and professional and leadership development.

Delimitations of Study

This study was limited to one specific type of co-curricular service-learning experience, the alternative spring break. There are multiple program models that offer a range of experiences covering different program variables (e.g. longer duration, local service, international service, faith-based activities, and staff led). The intent of this study was to lay the foundation for future work that could expand on the conclusions drawn from this one specific model type.

Additionally, the study was limited to the outcomes demonstrated by program participants and did not include a control group as a point of comparison due to the small sample size available in the secondary data. Future studies of a greater scale could use findings from this research as a basis for experimentally controlled studies for the various program components and identified constructs.

This study was also limited in its scope to a single institution's alternative spring break program. The institution studied was a highly selective university classified as Research-I institution with a "Community Engagement" designation in the Carnegie system. While the alternative break programmatic model used at the institution where the instrument was piloted is widely accepted and used at other institutions, the same results may not be replicated elsewhere. Colleges and universities that are not as selective, that do not have a significant emphasis on research, or do not have as high an institutional

commitment to civic engagement may not see similar results. The researcher necessarily limited the study due to available funding and the time available to complete the project, although a wider sample of different types of institutions (e.g. public, two year, religious, minority serving, and women's) would provide a greater ability to generalize the findings.

Finally, this study is also based on some of the earlier findings of the service-learning field, which identified critical components of the pedagogy. Substantial additional scholarship has pursued alternative pedagogies that differentiate between skill-set practice and reflexivity, civic values and critical citizenship, and social justice activism (Britt, 2012). Each of these approaches has strong merits for use by practitioners, but in different settings. As a starting point to bridging findings between curricular and co-curricular service-learning, this study and its review of literature focuses on the first and second pedagogical frameworks, skill-set practice and reflexivity and civic values and critical citizenship, as their foci are on the intellectual (content learned by participants) and moral (values clarified by participants) domains. Future research may examine other frameworks and work to extend the conclusions drawn, particularly as the alternative break model and movement emphasize components of active citizenship and social justice.

Significance of the Study

There is a strong need for additional research in this area, as there is a large gap in the literature and knowledge about this type of co-curricular service-learning experience. There is a significant amount of research addressing general volunteerism and curricular service-learning, but little on co-curricular service-learning. By filling this void,

practitioners will be able to use the study's results to benchmark programs more easily, justify budgetary expenses for program, and demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Additionally, there is a great need, as demonstrated by Break Away's 2010 Annual Report, for a common, validated instrument to measure outcomes from alternative break experiences. This report is the result of an informal national survey of the group's members, in which practitioners in alternative break programs were asked to identify their greatest concerns and needs for development in the field. Among the commonly expressed frustrations and challenges of the field (e.g. program funding, risk management, and faculty involvement), program coordinators also identified the need for a common instrument that could be used to demonstrate outcomes to a variety of constituencies (funding sources, accrediting organizations, governing bodies, and donors).

The challenge faced by many colleges offering alternative break programs, however, is systematically and accurately measuring the student learning that takes place prior to, during, and after the trips (Break Away, 2011). This shortcoming, identified by practitioners, is linked to a gap in the literature, which mainly focuses on curricular service-learning. To begin to fill that gap, this study seeks to examine the learning and development outcomes achieved by students participating in an alternative break program.

While the *ABPS* has been validated for use in measuring some outcomes associated with alternative breaks, existing literature supports the inclusion of additional constructs associated with student participation. The qualitative portion of this study

seeks to reveal additional learning identified by participants for inclusion in future research.

Overview of the Study

First presented in the study is an overview of the literature in the fields of experiential learning and service-learning (both curricular and co-curricular); within the field of co-curricular service-learning, alternative break literature is specifically addressed. This section also includes an analysis of the elements shared by both the curricular and co-curricular service-learning pedagogies: service, education, and reflection. This is the common framework from which similar learning outcomes are hypothesized to develop. Finally, the literature review concludes with support for the constructs measured by the validated instrument.

Following the literature review, the methods section includes information about the researcher and his role in the study, a description of the archival data sources used for analysis, the research questions, and the instruments originally used to collect the archival data. This is followed by details of how the archival data were collected. Next are descriptions of all variables included in the data analyses and information about the participants in the study. Next, the methods of data preparation used for both the qualitative and quantitative sets of data are addressed and, finally, the chapter concludes with the methodological approaches used to answer the research questions. This includes an outline of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques utilized.

The results section then presents the findings of the study. This starts with a general description of the qualitative and quantitative findings and is followed by

analyses that integrate these results by research question. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the study.

The final chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the findings and analyses of the study. This is first done in light of existing research and gaps in research and also outlines the limitations of the conclusions, both due to design and data restrictions. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings for academics, with respect to future research, and practitioners, with respect to changes in programmatic design. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the conclusions of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This study draws on literature from a number of interconnected fields that serve as the foundation for the instrument and its proposed constructs, including scholarly interpretations and findings from research related to experiential education and service-learning. Encompassed in the review of literature is an exploration of the definitions of service-learning (both curricular and co-curricular), and the importance of various aspects of the elements of service-learning.

Experiential education and service-learning have historical ties that trace their roots from Dewey's 1933 and 1938 works with education to the various theories that validate the learning outcomes from service that is directly incorporated into academic coursework. Distinct from curricular experiences, limited research specifically addressing co-curricular service-learning is presented, as well as its relationship to student learning. Following an analysis of the two parallel pedagogies of curricular and co-curricular service-learning, there is an analysis of the common elements that connects them. Finally, the chapter concludes with the constructs represented in the instrument and the context in which they fit into the existing research. Figure 1 represents the hierarchy of the literature and presentation of the chapter's information.

Theoretical Framework and Context of the Study

The theoretical roots of experiential learning can be found in the research and writings of Dewey (1938), which emphasize "learning by doing" or the pedagogy of engaging students in learning through direct personal experiences. Dewey insisted that

education should not be confined to a sterile classroom or laboratory, rather it should transcend those walls to provide opportunities for direct interaction with people and concrete examples of abstract theories from the classroom. Dewey emphasized that true learning can only occur when learners are exercising their real world experiences (Harkavy & Benson, 1998). This connection is "an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (Dewey, 1933, p. 7).

Integral to experiential education is the concept of reflective thinking, which Dewey defined as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933, p. 9).

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Experiential Learning</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Service-Learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curricular Service-Learning</td><td>Co-Curricular Service-Learning
(Alternative Break Experiences)</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1. Hierarchy and organization of information in literature review.

Researchers and scholars have since applied Dewey's philosophy of experiential education to the construction of service-learning theory (Giles, 1991; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Kraft, 1996). Dewey's work has been expanded significantly over the last 70 years to include a framework for service-learning, which now encompasses two sub-fields or pedagogies, curricular service-learning and co-curricular service-learning. These pedagogies are linked in terms of the commitment to engaging students in learning through community-based experiences.

Service-learning in general has been defined in a number of different ways by both researchers and professional organizations. The National Service Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) (n.d.), for example, focuses on a pedagogy (teaching and learning strategy) that brings together meaningful service to the community with educational and reflective components that not only achieve learning goals but also teach students civic values and responsibility and build strength within communities. Toole and Toole (1992) provided a similar definition by referring to service-learning more specifically as a form of experiential learning and one in which students attempt to address community problems through the application of academic knowledge and critical thinking skill. Finally, the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) (1994) advises practitioners that service-learning requires carefully monitored service experiences, and it is through these activities that students have opportunities to actively reflect and achieve intentional learning goals through their experiences.

Defining curricular service-learning. Each of the definitions of service-learning above contains the crucial elements of civic involvement and learning (service, education, and reflection), with some variation on other important characteristics. None, however, explicitly connects with co-curricular or non-course-based activities. Furco (1996) has argued, for instance, that service-learning must have some academic context to ensure that experiences equally benefit the provider of the service (student) and the recipient of the service (community), in addition to having an equal focus on both that which is provided (service) and that which is occurring (learning). This definition implies that the "academic context" must include a faculty-led, classroom-based learning component.

This increased adoption of the pedagogy of experiential education has also led to increased research in the field of curricular service-learning; curricular service-learning has been studied extensively since the 1990s and linked to a wide variety of outcomes for student learning. In the domain of cognitive development, for example, curricular-service learning has been linked to improved critical thinking skills (Astin & Sax, 1998). Improvement in the area of civic involvement has also been demonstrated through greater participation in community service activities (Fenzel & Leary, 1997), an increased likelihood of choosing a profession in public service (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999), and a greater sense of civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998). Students also achieved other positive developmental changes, such as a greater sense of personal identity (Astin & Sax, 1998) and increased ability to develop a meaningful life philosophy (Astin et al., 1999). Finally, there were demonstrated benefits for values clarification and faith discernment through greater moral development (Boss, 1994) and a stronger commitment to helping others (Astin et al., 1999).

While most of the initial findings about curricular service-learning focused primarily on the learning outcomes achieved for students, additional studies have also highlighted the impact on faculty and the community. Findings of research on service-learning have noted that faculty using service-learning report satisfaction with the quality of student learning achieved (Balzadeh, 1996; Gelmon, Howard, & Shinnamon, 1998). In a study that involved faculty members utilizing a service-learning pedagogy, the faculty members indicated that their service-learning classes were gateway experiences that opened students to a stronger commitment to research, particularly community-based research (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996). Additionally, community

partners expressed satisfaction with student participation in service-learning projects (Driscoll et al., 1996; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, Geschwind, Goldman, Kaganoff, Sundt, Vogelgesang, & Klein, 1998) and indicated that the students' efforts provided a useful service in communities (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994 and Gray et al., 1998).

Defining co-curricular service-learning. By contrast, co-curricular service-learning includes each of the elements of traditional curricular service-learning, but does not feature a classroom-based learning component. Learning about societal issues or problems (i.e. lack of affordable housing) is addressed through other means, such as staff-led seminars, attendance at panels, interviews with community partners, or any number of other educational activities. College student participation in co-curricular service-learning programs has grown substantially since the 1990s, primarily driven by support from students, educators, conferences, and organizations. These organizations have included Campus Compact, Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) and its successor, Idealist.org, International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE), the National Society for Experiential Education, Conference on Applied Learning in Higher Education (CALHE), and the American Association of Higher Education (Fricker et al., 2000; Howard, Gelmon, & Giles, 2000).

Practitioners and researchers have published relatively few empirical studies on the impact of co-curricular service-learning on the learning and involvement of students. Among the studies that do exist in this area, fewer still are quantitative in nature, and none utilize a common, validated instrument specifically developed to measure learning outcomes from this these types of experiences. The body of research is largely

represented by individual case studies, such as the analysis of a single alternative break experience (i.e. Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004).

Representative of the body of research is a case study that examined the differences between one curricular and one co-curricular alternative spring break trips (McElhaney, 1998). In this particular doctoral dissertation, that author acknowledged the limitations of the case study model, including the low generalizability due to the small sample size ($N = 22$) and the lack of a control group. The study was largely based on qualitative findings that sought to inject a student voice into the future development of quantitative measures. Additionally, the study focused on two findings that were not substantially different from the overall collegiate experience: ability to make friends and ability to understand (or empathize with) those that were not similarly situated.

Since co-curricular service-learning combines all of the elements of curricular service-learning, but does so outside the context of the classroom and faculty teaching, it is important, then, that more research is done on this subject to improve understanding of the impact of such projects. College students' efforts account for a significant portion of service undertaken in the United States: 26.1% (3.1 million) of college students volunteer 312 million hours of service annually (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010). Often this service is directly tied to learning about specific social issues and entails applying academic or professional skills, but it does not contain an in-classroom component (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010).

Co-curricular service-learning activities are frequently organized by campus volunteer, service, or civic engagement offices, but they are also the result of student-initiated programs (Burns, Reid, Toncar, Anderson, & Wells, 2008). One example of

these activities is an alternative break trip, which immerses students for a week of service, education, and reflection in a community with which they otherwise might not interact. In 2011, over 15,000 students participated in over 1,500 alternative break service trips, both foreign and domestic (Break Away, 2011). The evolution of the alternative break movement in the United States over the last twenty years has changed the way in which many college students learn about and seek to address social issues (Break Away, 2011). These students engage in service activities that take them out of the classrooms and give them an opportunity to apply academic knowledge through hands-on experience in host communities.

At its core, curricular service-learning takes experiential education and explicitly connects it to academic classroom learning that also engages in community-based work. Jacoby defined service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (1996, p. 5). Curricular service-learning as defined by Howard (1993) includes five common elements: integration with academic curriculum; intentional learning goals; structured reflection; reciprocal benefits for the student and community; and development of civic responsibility or citizenship. Echoing Jacoby (1996), Mintz and Hesser (1996) also identified reciprocity and reflection as two key elements of curricular service-learning.

Reciprocity and service-learning. Authors define reciprocity in service-learning as the mutual exchange of action, ideas, and dependence (Mintz & Hesser, 1996). Students and those they serve must participate as both *magister* and *discipuli*, both

teacher and pupil, in the shared learning space of service. It is recognized in this setting that each has something to offer to the learning of the other (Mintz & Hesser, 1996).

Furco (1996, p. 5) provides a framework in Figure 2 from which the reciprocity of service programs could be visually represented by examining the "beneficiary" (Recipient to Provider) and "focus" (Service to Learning) of activities. This model situates service-learning at the center of each continuum, contrasted by Volunteerism (Recipient/Service), Internship (Provider/Learning), Community Service, and Field Education.

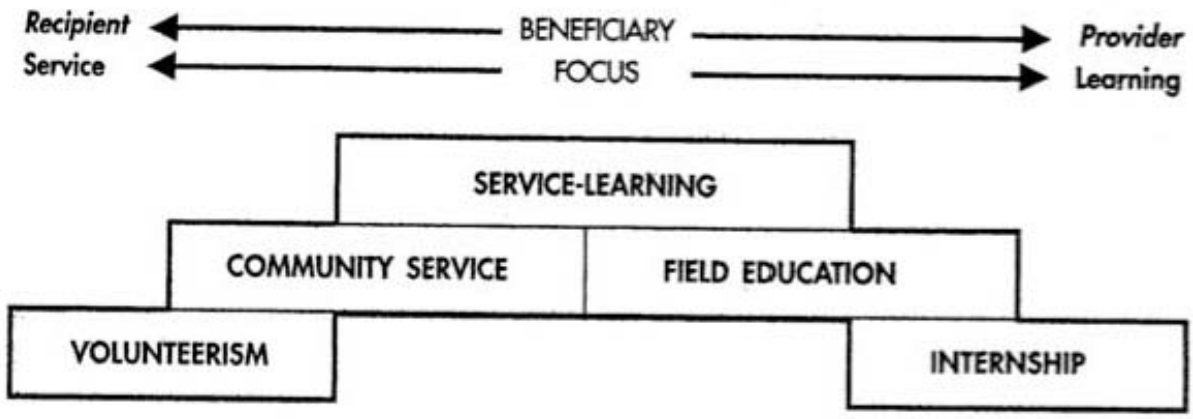

Figure 2. Continuum of activities based on beneficiary / focus of efforts (Furco, 1996).

Furco's interpretation attempted to settle disagreements related to the semantic use of service learning (balanced approach to both aspects), service-learning (balanced approach to both aspects, but with a connection provided through reflection), SERVICE learning (emphasis on the service provided), and service LEARNING (emphasis on the student learning achieved) (Sigmon, 1994). While these may seem to be trivial distinctions, Furco's model placed his definition of service-learning as a pedagogy that equally benefited the provider and the recipient and focused equally on the service itself

and the student's learning. It also acknowledged that these two dimensions could explain other forms of experiential learning and places commonly understood pedagogies in different locations on the spectrum.

Service-learning experiences differ from other experiential learning experiences by virtue of the focus of the outcomes. In practical terms, an internship with an accounting firm for a business student differs significantly from a service-learning placement with a non-profit neighborhood tax center for the same business student. In the former scenario, the primary focus is on the learning achieved by the student through practical work experience, rather than on any service to the business community. Additionally, the student is the primary beneficiary from the experience, rather that the employer (accounting firm), which may only receive negligible benefits from a worker who has only received minimal training in the field.

By contrast, the latter situation provides for a dual focus in which both the learning of the student (practical training in tax return preparation) and the services provided (tax preparation assistance for a low-income community) are equally emphasized. It is also clear in this scenario that both the provider of the service (student) and the recipient of the service (community member) are beneficiaries of the service-learning placement. A student may otherwise never have the opportunity to practice tax preparations that involved deductions and benefits available to lower-income populations and a community member may have otherwise overlooked available deductions and benefits due to the inaccessibility of services and complex nature of the tax code.

Reflection and service-learning. Structured reflection can take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, class discussions, presentations, writing assignments

(communal or individual), journals, or artistic expression (such as music, poetry, visual art, or documentaries). It is through this structured reflection that critical analysis of social issues that the links between academic content and service can occur (Ikeda, 1999). For reflection to be an effective method for learning, however, it must move beyond a simple description of events and activities. A greater depth and examination is necessary to uncover "critical incidents" that impact perceptions and actions (Stanton, 1995). Writing samples, in particular, must proceed through a description, an analysis, and then, finally, reflection. This same model can be utilized in group reflections using a simplified, "What? / So what? / Now what?" approach that students easily grasp.

The reflection step of the journey is what ties together the service to the learning. By reflecting upon the project, the participants will be able to see how their classroom education played a role in their co-curricular service-learning. This is key to ensuring that students leave this experience with more than just a few fond memories, rather they have gained a deeper understanding about the world around them (Driscoll et al., 1996). Reflection necessarily provides structured time for students to consider their service and what they perceive to have learned (Gray et al., 1998). Service-learning also fosters the development of both cognitive and affective skills, such as empathy, personal values, beliefs, awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, social-responsibility, and helps to foster a sense of caring for others (Astin & Sax, 1998)[1]. As a subset of experiential education, it is rooted in a reciprocal relationship in which the service reinforces and strengthens the learning and the learning reinforces and strengthens the service.

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[1] Recent neurobiological research also provides physiological evidence that affective education experiences stimulate cognitive growth. For more information, see Thayer & Lane (2009), Wagar & Thagard (2004), Immordino-Yang & Damasio (2007).

Rationale for restricted literature review. As noted earlier in the delimitations, the present study focuses on the pedagogical frameworks of skill-set practice and reflexivity and civic values and critical citizenship. This is not to diminish the work that has been advanced by researchers with respect to social justice activism, but to the narrow the focus of this study. [1] This approach also provides a frame of reference that is more easily compared across curricular and co-curricular models. Britt (2012) provides a comparison of the various typologies of service-learning as follows.

Skill-set practice and reflexivity. Under this framework, the goal is for learners to develop content knowledge and to gain self-efficacy. This is accomplished through a combination of discipline-specific coursework and community-based work that emphasizes learning by doing (experiential learning) and includes a critical component of reflection. It is rooted in Dewey's work on experiential education and identifies outcomes that are based in the internalization of knowledge through a connection between knowledge and practice. This particular framework is the pedagogy utilized in this study and approaches student development of the learner through the lens of content competence.

Civic values and critical citizenship. The next typology examined by Britt (2012) examines the individual in relation to other in society; it aids, in some respects, in the identification of an individual's moral obligations to a larger community. Given the constructs identified by the *ABPS*, there is some overlap with this pedagogy and the alternative spring break programming model, particularly as they related to values

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[1] Service-learning has also been documented to achieve a number of learning outcomes related to social justice, but this is not the explicit focus of this study or the *ABPS*. For more information, refer to Warren (1998).

clarification and moral or faith development. This framework is based in a democratic tradition of citizenship and was also a focus of Dewey's (1916) work on democracy and education. Outcomes associated with this framework are measured in terms of a student's development in relation to others in society and requires an understanding of the concepts of self, community, and their interaction. While some elements of this pedagogy are integrated into the literature review, such as values development (morality, faith, or spirituality), the concepts of democracy and citizenship are left largely unexplored in the present study.[2]

Social justice activism. Finally, Britt (2012) discusses a framework the goals of which include the changing of oppressive systems to ultimately address human needs on a greater scale. This approach examines systemic changes through the lens of social justice and focuses on the political domain. One of the outcomes of this pedagogy seeks to create an activist orientation among participants. While this goal aligns with portions of Break Away's "Active Citizen Continuum" (Appendix A), addressed in greater depth later, the continuum is not necessarily reflective of outcomes for all students from co-curricular service-learning or alternative spring break experiences. Developmentally, many students are still engaged in the early stages of growth with respect to community-based experiences.

Ultimately, the goal of service-learning is to produce informed citizens that are changes agents seeking to correct systemic problems through a variety of engagement activities. Both curricular and co-curricular service-learning seek to achieve this same

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[2] Gottleib and Robinson (2002) provide a curriculum guide that helps educators promote civic responsibility as an outcome from service-learning activities.

end result, but approach it in different manner. By focusing on one particular pedagogy (skill-set practice and reflexivity), with elements from a second (civic values and critical citizenship), it becomes easier to compare outcomes from the two approaches. With this understanding of the basic principles of service-learning, it is possible to examine research findings from the branching pedagogies of curricular and co-curricular service-learning. The next two sections proceed through an overview of findings from research in each respective field, with co-curricular service-learning section including specific findings and research on alternative break experiences.

Examining Curricular Service-Learning Research.

Three seminal sources examined many of the earlier findings from curricular service-learning research and laid the foundation for later work in student outcomes: Eyler and Giles (1999); Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee (2000); and a RAND Corporation study (Gray, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 1999 and Gray et al., 1998). Each of these studies consisted of large sample sizes, examined multiple learning outcomes, and relied on the self-reported outcomes of students, based on pre- and post-intervention assessments.

The first source, Eyler and Giles (1999), included three studies involving over 1,500 undergraduate students in a national survey; 400 participants were not enrolled in service-learning courses, while the remaining 1,100 were enrolled. The studies, consisting of survey data collected prior to the start of service-learning courses and at the conclusion of the courses, were designed to examine student development relating to their involvement in the course. While portions of the survey informed the current instrument, it was designed to look at longer-term service-learning experiences, such as

those experienced in a semester-long course, and was ill-suited for shorter experiences, such as Alternative Spring Break trips.

In addition to the quantitative portion of the study, it also included both reflective interviews with students, as well as problem-solving activities to examine the developmental changes that resulted from participation in the courses. The research design focused on learning outcomes related to four areas: 1) understanding and application of academic course content in a community setting; 2) development of critical thinking skills and changes in perspective; 3) personal and interpersonal development (including communication skills, self-efficacy, leadership skills, tolerance and acceptance of diversity, connectedness to the community, and valuing a career in the "helping" professions); and 4) citizenship skills and competencies (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Among the many findings from this study, the academic outcomes identified in students engaged in curricular service-learning courses, relative to those students in comparable non-service-learning courses, included a deeper or improved understanding of academic content and a greater ability to apply course materials and concepts to "real world" problems. Moving beyond purely academic outcomes, participants also exhibited an improvement in problem-solving skills and ability to analyze complex causes and solutions to problems, as well as an enhanced belief among students that they had learned more through service-learning pedagogy than through traditional, lecture-based courses.

In terms of professional skills, the findings indicated an increased likelihood of valuing and entering a career in service and an increased belief in the usefulness of service-learning developing career skills. There were also indications that curricular service-learning resulted in a greater knowledge and awareness of self and increased self-

efficacy, in addition to an improvement in leadership skills. They also had an increased belief in the importance of social justice and the need to change political and public policies. Furthermore, the students had a greater feeling of connectedness to the community. Finally, the research supported findings that students participating in curricular service-learning demonstrated an appreciation for other cultures and commonalities with service recipients (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The second study was longitudinal in design, including over 22,000 college undergraduates (Astin et al., 2000). Most participants took the initial survey as matriculating first-year students in 1994 and then took a follow-up survey in their fourth year of college. Conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California - Los Angeles, the research utilized a proprietary instrument and, as such, was not incorporated into the present instrument.

Respondents included students who had participated in a range of service (both curricular and co-curricular) activities, as well as those who had not engaged in any service projects during the course of their undergraduate career. Similar to those studied by Eyler and Giles (1999), this study measured outcomes related to: 1) academics; 2) self-efficacy and leadership skills; 3) career plans; 4) personal values related to activism and racial understanding; and 5) future plans to participate in service (Astin et al., 2000).

Particularly important findings from this study included an increased benefit, relative to those students in comparable non-service-learning courses, in academic outcomes, including GPA, critical thinking skills, and, most notably, writing skills. Additionally, participants saw increased likelihood of choosing a service career; an

increased commitment to promoting racial understanding; and an increased likelihood of participating in future service activities.

The RAND Corporation study (Gray et al., 1998; Gray et al., 1999) was a final examination of the learning outcomes from the Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Service America program. The study encompassed data from a three-year period and included nearly 3,500 students, over 925 higher education institutions, and nearly 850 community organizations. The instrument utilized for this study, once again, while it informed the current instrument, was not directly applicable, since the target audience included both students and non-student populations.

The study supplemented and supported the work of Eyler and Giles (1997), Astin et al. (2000), and other contemporary curricular service-learning researchers. Their research laid the foundation for the RAND Corporation study to examine learning outcomes associated with four areas: 1) academic skills, 2) professional skills, 3) life skills, and 4) civic participation.

Students who reported strong effects of service in their development were more likely than others to report that course content linked to their service experiences. Additionally, students engaged in curricular service-learning, relative to their non-service-learning counterparts, had higher GPAs, were more satisfied with their courses, and reported that they had actively engaged in reflective activities either through writing or discussion (Gray et al. 1998).

Conclusion of curricular service-learning research. Each of these three studies, while offering strong evidence for the strength of learning outcomes achieved by curricular service-learning, were also ill-suited for application to a co-curricular service-

learning environment. While theses studies established a solid foundation of empirical research for curricular service-learning, they could neither be generalized to co-curricular service-learning, nor were the instruments utilized easily obtained by practitioners.

Despite the significant findings from the area of curricular service-learning, there remains no consensus on scales for measuring outcomes from these experiences. Recently, Weber, Weber, and Young (2010) examined the reliability of four scales that could be used for curricular service-learning. The scales - Civic Participation, Self-efficacy Toward Service (Weber, Weber, Sleeper, & Schneider, 2004), Attitude Toward Helping Others (Webb, Green, & Brashear, 2000), and College Education's Role in Addressing Social Issues (Weber, Weber, & Craven, 2008) - were found to have acceptable correlations when used in curricular service-learning experiences. Additional research could potentially extend these findings to the field of co-curricular service-learning.

While other studies exist that support the findings from various curricular service-learning experiences, these seminal studies provide a representative sample of the outcomes identified and supported by empirical research. Moving on to the alternative pedagogy of co-curricular service-learning, there is also support for additional outcomes that can be achieved absent the course-based integration.

Examining Co-Curricular Service-Learning and Alternative Break Research

Despite the first element of service-learning noted by Howard (1993), integration with academic curriculum, there is a growing consensus among researchers and practitioners that this general definition can be split into both academic and co-curricular service-learning. Used sporadically as a term in the literature since the 1990's, co-

curricular service-learning is defined more by exclusion than inclusion. Eyler and Giles' (1999) major work, which focused on programs that link service to the community and academic study, designated a portion of service-learning as that which is, "non-course-based . . . [and] include[s] a reflective component and learning goals" (p. 5). Co-curricular service-learning includes the core elements of service, education, and reflection, and is distinguished from curricular service-learning only in the respect that it does not integrate a faculty-taught academic component.

Alternative spring break program model. One specific area of research in co-curricular service-learning has been the immersion service-learning experience or alternative break program model. According to Albert (1996), these experiences are "an opportunity not simply to work in but to live the life of a community for a period of time. These experiences may be brief, as short as a week in duration, or they may extend for a summer, a semester or longer. With these experiences, an unfamiliar culture becomes the setting for all facets of the students' life" (p. 183).

These programs place teams of students in communities to engage in community service and experiential during academic break periods. Students who are engaged in these short-term projects work with community partners to provide a direct service to the community, while also learning about social issues such as hunger, homelessness, health care, environmental protection, and literacy. Students are faced with community problems in a very real way and work with members of communities with which they might normally not have contact. There are several goals for these types of projects, but primary among them are exposing students to community problems, actively reflecting

on their own personal interactions with the community problem, and seeking continued involvement after the conclusion of the program.

In the United States, the core goals of the alternative break movement have been crafted by Break Away, a national organization started in 1991 by two Vanderbilt University alumni. The "Active Citizen Continuum" (Appendix A) defines the scale along which students or any individual can fall, with respect to their engagement with societal problems (Break Away, n.d. b). The driving philosophy behind Break Away is to help students move along this continuum, from "Members" (individuals that are uninformed and unconcerned with their role is social problems) eventually to "Active Citizens" (those for whom societal problems become a priority in values and life choices). It is through alternative breaks, including both pre- and post-trip experiences, that students can experience transformational moments.

Alternative spring break research. The majority of the studies in this area employ participant focus groups, participant interviews, pre- and post-experience surveys, and analyses of student writings (e.g. McElhaney, 1998; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998; Biggs Garbuio, 1999; Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Bohon, 2007; Zafran, 2009). In addition, most of these same studies also focus on one specific Alternative Spring Break experience, utilizing a case study model.

One exception is the study conducted by Keen and Hall (2009), a four-year longitudinal study that tracked the learning outcomes of the Bonner Scholars Program. The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not co-curricular service-learning had an impact on the desired outcomes of the college experience. Utilizing a proprietary instrument developed in 1995, data were collected from undergraduate participants in a

co-curricular service-learning program (Bonner Scholars Program) in two cohorts between 1999 and 2004. Findings from the study indicated academic, civic, and personal gains were influenced by four years of involvement in the program's activities, including an alternative break trip. Most notable was the development achieved between the freshman and senior years regarding the importance of opportunities for dialogue and between the junior and senior years regarding skills needed to cross boundaries of difference.

This study presents a strong methodological approach, is generalizable to a larger population, and presents a clear direction for future research. While not a critique of the study itself, there are limitations to the generalizability of the findings to most short- or mid-term co-curricular service-learning experiences. Since the participants were all part of a multi-year and multi-engagement program, it is difficult to attribute the findings to the individual experiences, particularly to their one-week alternative break trips.

Moving on to a more narrowly constructed study, the purpose of Zafran's research (2009) was to examine the development of student leaders, with a focus on the influence of self-reflection. Participants in this study included leaders ($N = 46$) of both domestic and international Alternative Spring Break experiences. Leaders had prior experience in similar programs as participants and also completed a training program with the campus service-learning office, including a15-week leader training. This training included emphases on self-reflection and civic responsibility. As one of the three areas of commonality between curricular and co-curricular service-learning, the findings related to reflection are important to strengthen support for the construction of parallel pedagogies. Additionally, reflection is a metacognitive activity that indicates critical

thinking abilities, which are hypothesized to be developed through co-curricular service-learning.

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the researcher examined student development as it related to civic responsibility, personal competency, and efficacy for significant contributions to the community and saw increases in each of these areas of development. Zarfan also linked the changes to the theoretical foundations of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and grounded the changes in the self-reflective portion of the experiences.

Another area in which co-curricular service-learning research has supported learning outcomes is in civic commitment, as measured by the Social Responsibility Inventory (SRI). Cooper (2002) conducted a quantitative analysis of social responsibility across three groups (curricular service, co-curricular service, and traditional community service). This study sought to differentiate between outcomes from three separate, but sometimes similarly classified, service opportunities. Three campuses were included in the study, including participants ($N = 198$) engaged in service with Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity (traditional community service); an Alternative Spring Break (co-curricular service learning); or a credit bearing service-learning course (curricular service learning).

While the study presented quantitative data in support of its findings, the sample sizes of the groups make for limited generalizability to larger populations. For each group there were only 90, 36, and 72 participants respectively in the traditional community service, co-curricular service-learning, and curricular service-learning groups. At the same time, the research did attempt to resolve a continued ambiguity in language

used within the fields of service-learning and civic engagement. This operationalization of terminology, at the time, was proving particularly problematic for the field, so the study made an advance for researchers and practitioners.

The post-hoc procedures identified significant differences between SRI scores for the curricular and co-curricular service-learning experiences, with SRI scores for co-curricular experiences being higher than those for curricular experiences. It did not conclude, however, that there were measurable differences in the outcomes between co-curricular service and traditional community service. This may have been limited by the reliance of multiple data collectors, inconsistency of the experiences across multiple campuses, and the brevity of the instrument utilized.

An additional study conducted by Ivory (1997) examined the experiences of Alternative Spring Break participants ($N = 17$) from multiple trips. Each agreed to participate in small-group interviews two weeks following their return from his or her service site. The interviews were then analyzed for common themes, with the researchers focus shifting to one specific question, "What was it like the first week after returning from your Alternative Break site?" (p. 106).

Findings from Ivory's study (1997) focused on several seemingly negative aspects experienced by participants in their period of re-entry: difficulty adjusting back to a familiar physical environment, short-term negative academic outcomes due to re-entry challenges, barriers to communication with other encountered by the participants, and isolation and distance in personal relationships. While these outcomes are not positive, they provide an important guidepost for practitioners to apply in student affairs. According to Break Away (n.d.), one of the eight components that build a quality

experience is re-orientation or a means of on-going reintegration back into a familiar environment. This entails continued reflection on the meaning of experiences, communal sharing of experiences, and local involvement related to the issues addressed at students' service sites.

Ivory's (1997) findings were also limited by the data collection method, which included short, small-group interviews, rather than individual interviews that could have provided greater depth and more emergent themes. Additionally, because there were no pre-trip interviews, the researcher did not have a baseline measure against which to compare the findings.

Another area in which some research has been completed is the "meaning-making" achieved by Alternative Spring Break trip participants (Hui, 2009). The researcher in this study was a participant-observer who was embedded in the experience with participants ($N = 11$), joining all activities, including service and reflective experiences. This qualitative study found several emergent themes that supported earlier findings from other researchers in the field. Similar to Ivory (1997), the researcher identified that participants found the intense immersion context of the experience to be disorienting (both during the experience and after). Additionally, however, the participants developed a more complicated view of race in relation to the issues they directly addressed through their service, as well as through their peer interactions.

Conclusion of co-curricular service-learning development. This sampling of literature in co-curricular service-learning and Alternative Spring Breaks presents some consistent findings that support the value of co-curricular service-learning, but the extant research also acknowledges some of the needs for continued growth and development in

the field. Outcomes in civic commitment and social responsibility, faith development, personal self-reflection, and academic learning are all reported in the research, yet there are significant limitations to findings.

These conclusions contribute to the knowledge of the field and emphasize the need for advance planning, structure, and integrated reflection in experiences. Researchers who identified negative experiences have contributed to the understanding of components that create positive experiences for other co-curricular service-learning participants.

In discussions of the limitations of their studies, there was a common theme, mainly due to the qualitative nature of their findings. Some authors stated that the research findings were highly interpretive (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998) and had limited generalizability (Biggs Garubio, 1999; McElhaney, 1998), while other did not address the inherent limitations of a case study model at all and even generalized their findings to other community colleges (Bohon, 2007).

Outcomes Measured by Instrument

The literature also supports the development of constructs that are comparable to the learning outcomes from both curricular and co-curricular service-learning. A valid and reliable model to explain student learning outcomes from co-curricular service-learning is critical to the advancement of the body of knowledge. With the findings from both fields taken into consideration, the *ABPS* was developed to measure outcomes across three constructs supported by the literature.

"Faith in Action through Service." Each of the five items in this construct seeks to understand the drive of individuals to act on their faith through service to others:

- I try to apply my faith to solving social issues in my community.
- I feel driven by my faith to reduce the suffering of others.
- I feel a higher power's presence in my interactions serving other people.
- I seek out opportunities to increase my faith through service.
- My faith regularly guides my actions.

Supported by existing research (e.g. Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003 and Kyker, 2003), the common thread running through this construct is the application of faith and spirituality though service. There is a reciprocal relationship noted by Kyker (2003) that makes the differentiation between the influence of faith on inclination to serve and the influence of inclination to serve on faith, but there is a correlation between the two variables. This construct relies on the assumption that an individual may utilize faith as a mean of achieving deeper spiritual understanding, commitment, or application of values.

"Knowledge in Action through Service." The items in this construct are all conceptually related by a shared component of the application of knowledge to a community setting:

- I am able to apply academic learning from courses to solve community problems.

- I am able to explain academic theory I have learned in classes in the context of my community work.
- Others see me as a resource for news in my community.
- I frequently discuss social problems with my friends.
- I try to formulate solutions to social problems in my community.

Rather than focusing strictly on the development of academic skills through service, the construct more broadly encompasses the importance of knowledge in a service setting and the practical ways in which it can be utilized. This is supported by findings from other researchers in curricular service-learning (e.g. Astin et al., 2000; Astin, Vogelgesang, Misa, Anderson, Denson, Jayakumar, & Yamamura, 2006; Gray et al., 1998; and Gray et al., 1999). Additionally, knowledge about an individual's own community and awareness of social problems were integrated into this construct, drawing on other consistent themes in the literature (e.g. Astin et al., 2000; Astin & Sax, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; and Astin, 2000). This construct also more appropriately represents a balanced model of service-learning, where there are interests in both the learning of the provider and the benefits to the community (Furco, 1996).

"Commitment in Action through Service." This construct examines participants' commitment to civic action through service:

- All people should volunteer to help in the community.
- I am certain that I will volunteer in my community in the future.
- I encourage others to get involved in solving community problems.
- I am personally committed to helping other people in need in my community.
- I am interested in learning about the diverse backgrounds of the people I meet.

Existing research solidly supports service-learning as a vehicle for the development of social responsibility or social justice (e.g. Biggs Garubio, 1999; Boyle-

Baise & Langford, 2004; and Gibboney, 1997) and civic responsibility (e.g. Astin et al., 2000; Myers-Lipton, 1994).

By limiting the construct to these items, the instrument focuses not only on the civic values of a participant, but also on his or her propensity to take action on personal service commitments. Additionally, there are elements of engaging others and learning about the backgrounds of community members. The final item, while it does not explicitly address a personal commitment to service, delves into an individual's willingness to proceed on a course of action that requires a level of personal discomfort. The very nature of service often requires engaging with "others," or those with whom you may not normally have contact, so a willingness to challenge these boundaries and learn more is indicative of a personal commitment to take action.

Other Constructs Supported by Literature

In addition to the areas measured by the *ABPS*, the literature supports additional learning outcomes that will be explored through the qualitative portion of this study. It is hypothesized that these constructs will be part of the narratives provided by participants in the focus group interviews.

Intercultural competence. This construct focuses on an individual's ability to examine an issue from a different cultural point of view, empathize with those from different backgrounds, appreciate the value added by different cultural perspectives, and understand their own personal biases or limitations related to intercultural relations. These developmental outcomes are viewed as separate and distinct from the willingness to be exposed to and learn from those from different cultures, which are identified as outcomes associated with the "Commitment in Action through Service" construct. In

some respects, these outcomes could be viewed as necessary precursors to intercultural competence.

Pascarella and Terezini (2005) found that interactions through service-learning changes students' awareness and attitudes towards others, particular among the community in which they serve. Likewise, Eyler and Giles (1999) that a reduction in stereotypes and an increase ability to work with others resulted from participation in service-learning experiences. Empathy may also mediate outcomes related to social dominance orientation (an individual preference for social hierarchy) as a result of helping others through service (Brown, 2011).

Personal efficacy. Personal efficacy for the purposes of this construct is very narrowly defined to relate to an individual's belief that he or she can have an impact on societal problems through service -- the belief that he or she can make a difference in the world. Research in this area (e.g., Zafran, 2009; Jacoby, 1996; and Howard, 1993) has demonstrated that direct service alone, without any reflective or educational component, fails to achieve the same goals as when those pieces are integrated into the experience. Students who are guided through a structured reflective activity have a greater sense that their service is building capacity in those they are serving and the organizations with whom they are partnering. Additionally, Rhoads (1997) concluded that student participants in service projects had a better concept of "self" and personal identity.

Professional and leadership development. Themes within professional development included respondents' long-term plans to enter careers in the public good, an understanding of the skills gained from service activities, and their ability to articulate these skills to potential employers. Additionally, since many of the skills acquired

through service relate specifically to leadership, future development of this construct should focus on more clearly defining what specific skills are gained; once identified, these skills should form a construct that is separate and distinct from Professional Development.

With these three constructs measured by the *ABPS* and three additional ones identified in the literature as being outcomes from curricular service-learning activities, the researcher started the process of developing an instrument that measured similar constructs in the realm of co-curricular service-learning.

Summary

Experiential learning has a long history, rooted in Dewey's work as early as the 1930's. This early work contributed to the development of curricular service-learning, and, more recently, co-curricular service-learning. Despite a variety of definitions of curricular service-learning, researchers have identified several core components crucial to the achievement of student learning outcomes. Likewise, research about curricular service-learning has suggested it to be effective in teaching students in several areas of competency, including academic skills, professional development skills, interpersonal and intercultural skills, and civic engagement skills.

Despite the extensive research in curricular service-learning, co-curricular service-learning has not been examined as closely. Parallels exist between curricular and co-curricular service-learning, in terms of the delivery of experiences, so it could be hypothesized that they may have some of the same learning outcomes. By identifying specific learning and development outcomes from curricular service-learning that can be

measured by an instrument utilized in a co-curricular experience, the gap in knowledge between the two areas may be bridged.

In particular, further development of the *ABPS* may add to practitioners' ability to assess, in a controlled manner, whether or not co-curricular service-learning programs are actually achieving their purported learning goals. In combination, the major studies identified service-learning outcomes associated with academic skills, professional skills, life skill, civic participation, and personal and interpersonal development. Through the use of the *ABPS*, the quantitative portion of this study will apply those findings associated with knowledge, faith, and commitment to a co-curricular setting through the analysis of archival data collected as part of a co-curricular service-learning program evaluation. Additionally, the qualitative portion of the study will provide support for the on-going development of the instrument to include other constructs.

Chapter 3

Methods

This study explored the impact of a co-curricular service learning program, specifically a domestic alternative spring break trip, on participants' learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment when integrated with service. The goals of this study included describing changes in student self-perception related to these constructs, differentiating between participants' and non-participants' experiences, exploring how students describe the personal impact of the experience, and identifying specific components of the experience that influenced learning. Additionally, qualitative methods were utilized to identify other factors that may influence the relationship between the experience and learning outcomes.

This chapter discusses the researcher's background and role in the study, a description of archival data sources and the reasons for their collection, the research questions, and the proposed research design. It also addresses the research instrument utilized, procedures for original collection of archival data, the selected dependent and independent variables, the participants, the methods utilized to prepare both the qualitative and quantitative data for analysis, and proposed procedures for analyses of the data.

Researcher

The researcher's academic preparation for this work includes a Masters degree in Higher Education: Student Affairs, as well as course work and related research in pursuit of a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Individual Differences. All of this degree work was pursued in tandem with full-time professional work in the field of civic

engagement, service learning, and student development. Professional research and academic program practica have all involved a focus on program development and assessment of learning outcomes associated with undergraduate service activities.

The researcher has been the primary staff member responsible for the growth and development of the program to be studied at his current institution since 2002. Although the program existed at the time, it was limited to one or two experiences during students' spring break each year. The subsequent growth to a maximum of fifteen trips in one spring has been as a result of increased attention to student leader training and development, involvement with a national professional organization, and increased student demand for immersive service experiences. Although he did not participate in similar experiences as an undergraduate student, he has implemented alternative break programs at both a large, public, rural institution and a small, private, urban institution consistently for sixteen years.

The researcher is one of three staff members responsible for the recruitment, training, and advisement of student leaders involved in the alternative spring break program. He is a visible figure for the program participants, sharing responsibilities in group orientations, reflective activities, and program logistics, all of which necessitate e-mail and personal communication with the participants. Currently, despite this high visibility with program participants, there is limited direct contact associated with the program, unless participants are in leadership roles with other programs. In the past, however, the researcher has participated in trip planning and implementation, traveling with over a dozen groups to communities both domestic and international.

A primary motivating factor for the researcher is to initiate rigorous, high-quality studies within this field of work. Additionally, he believes that this research must be grounded in established student development and learning theory at the same time it provides accessible and useful direction for practitioners.

Archival Data Sources

As part of the researcher's routine program evaluation process, data were collected through both qualitative and quantitative means from program applicants and participants. This collection was part of an institutional assessment of the alternative spring break program's learning outcomes. All quantitative data were collected in a manner that ensured anonymity of responses, with data not being able to be matched to any particular participant. Additionally, given the size of the applicant pool, the aggregate data were insufficient to be able to identify specific participants based on any of the combined demographic data (e.g. gender and past program participation). An institutional representative from the office of the Chief Student Affairs Officer confirmed the data had been stripped of all identifiable information and was approved for use as archival data by the researcher.

Additionally, at the point of collection of qualitative data, focus group participants were asked to identify themselves in the audio and video recordings of the session only by a letter designation, to simplify the transcription of the conversation. At the opening of each session, participants were asked to identify themselves by their letter designation and provide their gender, class standing, and role in the program (participant or Site Leader). Following transcription of each of the focus group interviews, all video data files were deleted, with the audio file and transcription retained for archival purposes.

These two data sources contained no remaining identifiable information. An institutional representative from the office of the Chief Student Affairs Officer confirmed the data had been stripped of all identifiable information was approved for use as archival data by the researcher.

With knowledge of these archival data and significant involvement in the co-curricular service-learning program, the research proposed the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience?
2. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience?
3. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)?

4. What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants?

Research Design

To answer these research questions, this study incorporated both a descriptive, exploratory design and a survey design. To assess the relationship between participation in an alternative spring break experience and students' willingness to take action on faith, knowledge, and commitment through service, both qualitative and quantitative methods were be utilized in data analysis.

An instrument was used to evaluate participants on three individual sub-scales relative to the three constructs, "Faith in Action Through Service," "Knowledge in Action Through Service," and "Commitment in Action through Service." This instrument, *Alternative Break Participant Survey*, was utilized to identify a baseline measure on these constructs prior to participation in the program, after the pre-trip education component of the program, and following the completion of the program.

Additionally, three focus group interviews were conducted with the purpose of each group exploring one of these constructs. These focus groups allowed for a more detailed and descriptive narrative of the participants' experiences to be incorporated into the quantitative analysis.

A descriptive, explorative design was selected to enable the researcher to address the research questions more precisely, as well as to gain additional insight for future lines of research. Data collected from this research design allow for greater exploration of subjective experiences of the participants and greater understanding of the applicability of findings to program training and participant development (Best & Kahn, 1998). A

survey method was selected to collect data from a greater number of participants on a short research timeframe. Additionally, this method proved to be the least expensive and allowed for participants to provide feedback electronically through a system with which they were already familiar.

Quantitative data were critically important for this study; they can be used effectively and objectively to gauge participant placement on a continuum and allow for comparison over time. These data were used as points of comparison to answer the research questions related to participant and non-participant learning, learning associated with particular program components, and learning associated with the entire program. Qualitative research methods were also incorporated to allow for a greater depth of questioning and probing with participants. This depth was necessary for the development of future research hypotheses, as research in this particular area is sparse and there are multiple aspects of the programs that could prove to be confounding. Exploring students' experiences through a qualitative method helped identify some of these perplexing relationships and provide more specific direction for future researcher and, at the same time, a mixed research design complemented findings from the quantitative data analysis.

For purposes of this research design, components are defined and measured as follows:

- Component A is participation of the pre-trip education. Measurement of the impact of Component A occurred by examining the differences between the baseline (survey one) and after the pre-trip education (survey two).
- Component B is participation in the service trip, including the on-site service, reflection, and education. Measurement of the impact of Component B

occurred by examining the differences between after pre-trip education (survey two) and post-trip (survey three).

- Component C is the combination of both Components A and B, participation in the entire alternative break program, including pre-trip education and on-site service, reflection, and education. Measurement of the impact of Component C occurred by examining the differences between baseline (survey one) and post-trip (survey three).

Instrument

Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods, consistent with the methodology appropriate for the research questions. Quantitative data collection included an applicant/participant survey and qualitative data collection included focus group interviews based on a structured list of questions for participants.

Student responses were collected on the *Alternative Break Participant Survey* (*ABPS*) instrument that was developed and validated by the researcher in fall 2012. Fifteen questions were on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) and included five items related to each of the constructs of "Faith in Action through Service," "Knowledge in Action through Service," and "Commitment in Action through Service." Additionally, the researcher incorporated sixteen questions from the SDS-17, a short social desirability scale, to identify respondents inclined to answer in a socially desirable manner (Stöber, 2001). The instrument also included four demographic questions to identify respondents' gender, class standing, past involvement in the Alternative Spring Break program, and past level of service involvement). Finally, the instrument included the creation of a participant-

generated unique identifier, so that responses on subsequent surveys could be matched to each other; this unique identifier could not be matched by the researcher to identifiable participant information in order to ensure anonymity of responses. The full instrument, including the social desirability scale questions, is included as Appendix C. Three subscales in the instrument are associated with the three constructs identified above and were validated with Cronbach's alpha values of .939 (faith), .735 (knowledge), and .743 (commitment).

The three 30-minute focus group interviews were conducted using one common question, plus an additional three questions related to the specific construct that was the focus of that group. All three sets of questions, as well as the interview protocols, are included as Appendix D. The interview questions were part of a larger pool developed by the researcher, reviewed by three peer practitioners, revised to improve clarity, and then included in the final focus group interview protocols. All questions utilized were in an open-ended format to allow the participants' thoughts and perceptions to be clearly articulated in their own voice, rather than being constrained by closed-ended questions or a survey format.

Original Collection of Archival Data

Participants. Both qualitative and quantitative data utilized in the study were collected from participants who expressed a desire to enroll in the 2013 alternative spring break program at the host institution. Since participants all applied to engage in an extended volunteer project as part of the institution's alternative spring break program, they were all assumed to be pre-disposed to involvement in service activities.

The participants in this study were all undergraduate students of a small, highly selective, urban institution of higher education. The archival data included some staff, all of who were excluded from the data analysis, due to the researcher's focus on the learning outcomes of undergraduate students. Data were initially collected from these groups as part of the institution's program evaluation process, but it is not appropriate to include in the present study. There were 314 applicants, defining the population of the program, and for each of the three quantitative measurement points (application, pre-trip, and post-trip), there were 174, 81, and 88 respondents respectively. Through the use of a unique identifier generated and known only by the respondents, it was possible to determine the number of unique individual participants and the sample size.

Females were overrepresented in the population, as is typical for service activities (Burns, Reid, Toncar, Anderson, & Wells, 2008; Fitch, 1987). Additionally, all of the participants were of traditional college age, 18-22 years of age, with the number of participants varying significantly by class standing; a greater number of applicants are first and second year undergraduate students and significantly fewer are third and fourth year.

Assumptions of participants. Based on the known demographics of the participants, one assumption was that all student applicants to the alternative break program were pre-disposed to service involvement. All study participants sought to be involved in an extended service experience through the alternative break program, an optional co-curricular service-learning experience for students at the institution.

An additional assumption of the participant pool was that students might be economically advantaged. Participants must have the financial means to participate in

the alternative spring break program, since they must pay a registration fee (even though scholarships are available) and be able to forgo a week of work. Although partial assistance is available through participant scholarships, the need to apply for aid may have been deterrent for those students unable to pay the program fee.

Quantitative data collection. Applicants to the alternative spring break program were asked to participate voluntarily in an assessment of the program to help evaluate the achievement of specific learning goals. They were asked to participate after the application deadline had passed and prior to notification of their status (accepted/declined). Those who agreed to participate were asked to complete an on-line quantitative assessment.

An on-line delivery was chosen for several reasons: follow-up messages could be sent easily through the system; it was a no-cost option (as opposed to mail or printed surveys); delivery could be timed to coincide with student computer access times; and coverage (or access) was not an issue, since the respondents had all previously accessed the system. The portal through which the assessment was delivered was a web-based course technology platform with which all of the applicants were familiar. All respondents had previously joined the site and completed an application for the alternative spring break program, so they were familiar with the visual layout of the site and capabilities of the assessment. All questions on the survey could be answered through the use of single-selection radio buttons, so no advanced knowledge of the platform was necessary.

Applicants were asked to complete the assessment immediately after the application deadline and had one week to accomplish the task. E-mail reminders were

sent to all student applicants 24 and 72 hours after the application deadline, as well as 12 hours before the assessment closing time. Given the late-night hours of students studying at the host institution, both the release of the assessment and the subsequent reminders were set for 11:00pm on weekday evenings. The two subsequent data collection points, described below, were managed through a similar process.

This assessment was due prior to the announcement of the applicants selected for the program, so as not to lose applicants who were not selected to participate in the program. A criticism received of this design is that, despite assurances to the contrary, applicants may have felt that their answers could have an influence over their program acceptance. As an automated procedure embedded in the web course technology platform, students were able to see upon starting the assessment that it would be submitted anonymously; this served to reinforce the researcher's assurances that answers could not be matched to individual applicants.

At the second quantitative data collection point, although the collection process largely remained the same, responses were requested only from program participants; this excluded all applicants to the program who were not accepted. The rationale for this decision was in support of the research question that attempted to determine the impact of the pre-trip educational component of the program on participants. Program participants were asked to complete the assessment one week prior to the departure of their trip and had until they departed to accomplish the task. Again, e-mail reminders were sent to all student applicants 24 and 72 hours after the initial request, as well as 12 hours before the assessment closing time.

For the third and final data collection, survey responses were once again requested from the full applicant pool, including both those that had and had not been accepted to participate in the program. The rationale for this decision was in support of the research questions that sought to identify learning achieved in participants as a result of the trip component alone and to identify learning achieved in participants as a result of the entire program (both pre-trip education and on-site service, reflection, and education). This data set would also have allowed a comparison between program participants and non-participants (those that applied, but were not accepted), but that research question was eliminated due to insufficient data from which to draw conclusions. Program applicants and participants were asked to complete the assessment one week following the conclusion of the alternative spring break trips and had two weeks to accomplish the task. E-mail reminders were sent to all student applicants 24 and 72 hours after the initial request, as well as 12, 48, and 96 hours before the assessment closing time.

Having completed the collection of the data as part of a routine program review and received consent from his dissertation committee, the researcher sought and obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the subject institution and the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) at the University of Houston to conduct an analysis of the archival data. The data were removed from the web course technology site, stripped of any identifying characteristics, and were moved for storage to a University of Houston data center.

Qualitative data collection. All participants in the 2013 alternative spring break program were asked to participate voluntarily in an institutional assessment of the program to evaluate the achievement of specific learning goals. They were asked to

participate after the conclusion of the program and the culminating public presentation of the groups' work. Invitations were sent to the group e-mail distribution list of each trip, which included all of the program's 181 participants. The invitation requested voluntary participation in one of three 30-minute focus group interviews to be conducted the following week, with lunch provided at each of the 12:00-1:00pm sessions. No compensation, aside from lunch, was offered for participation. It was noted that the data were being collected to improve understanding of the learning outcomes achieved by participants in the program and that they would be used for institutional assessment purposes. Participants were also informed that both audio and video devices would record the sessions to obtain an accurate record of the discussions, but that they would be destroyed following transcription of the sessions to maintain participant anonymity. Since the intent of the focus groups was to provide a broad perspective of experiences from multiple trips in the program, participants were requested not to sign up together with friends for the same session.

Those who wished to participate were asked to sign up on-line through a response form with Doodle (http://www.doodle.com) that automatically limited the number of participants for each group. Participation in the focus groups was limited to eight individuals for each session as a means for maintaining a more open and intimate atmosphere that encouraged discussion and allowed time for each individual to contribute fully. The on-line form was further restricted so as not to allow participants to identify other individuals involved in the focus groups.

The invitation was sent to each group by e-mail three times, including the initial invitation, reminder, and final request. Additionally, the researcher asked the two student

Site Leaders from each trip to encourage participants to contribute to knowledge of the program through involvement in the interviews; responses to this request were inconsistent so some groups did not receive this information from peer leadership within the program.

At the 5:00pm Sunday deadline of the call for participants, the researcher had secured a total of five, seven, and eight individuals for the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday focus groups, respectively. E-mails were sent to all of the participants at 9:00am on Monday morning, confirming the time, date, and location of the focus group interviews, as well as a reiteration of the purpose of the interviews. Additionally, at 9:00am on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, reminders were sent to the participants involved in the interviews for each respective day, encouraging their involvement and emphasizing the importance of their feedback to the program.

For each successive focus group interview, the environmental conditions were established to remain consistent. Prior to the arrival of each group, lunch was available for participants in a conference room that is part of the researcher's suite of offices. Audio and video recording devices were positioned at the end of the room on an elevated surface to ensure an adequate view of the room and all participants. Sound checks were conducted to verify the recordings would capture dialogue from within the room and were not subject to interference from outside the room. Since an internal thermostat was available in the room, a constant temperature of 74 degrees was set for each session.

As the group of participants arrived for each session at 12:00 pm, they were invited to take lunch and make themselves comfortable while waiting for the session to begin at 12:15 pm. After all participants had arrived, a staff member was asked not to

allow anyone to interrupt the session and the door to the conference room was locked. The group was reminded that both audio and video devices would record the session, and the recordings were started. It should be noted that the video recording of the first session was discontinued after the first five minutes of the session, due to a technical problem. In order to maintain consistency throughout the three sessions, the video camera was still present and turned on for the subsequent focus group interviews. The researcher acknowledged the use of the recording devices, welcomed the group, thanked them for their participation in the study, and proceeded to provide a summary of the purposes of the focus groups.

Once the introduction to the session was completed, the researcher opened each session with one common question across all three groups. This was followed by free-form discussion within the group, with the researcher taking notes and observing the group. When the discussion subsided, the researcher prompted the group with the next question. At the conclusion of each focus group, the researcher thanked the participants for their involvement.

Immediately following the third focus group, the audio data files were submitted to an on-line transcription service (http://www.rev.com). Upon receipt of the Word document with the transcribed sessions, the researcher listened to the original audio file and simultaneously checked the transcription for accuracy. Verbal hesitations (e.g. “um” and “ah”) were left out of the transcription, but moments of relevance (e.g. extended pause in conversation or laughter) were noted in the transcription. The researcher’s initial understanding was member-checked with focus group participants, ensuring accuracy of the researcher’s perceptions of the data. Following the member-checking,

the partial video recordings of the first session was deleted. As was the case for the quantitative assessment, some staff participants were involved in the focus group interviews for the institution's program assessment purposes, but their responses were not included in the research data analyzed in this study, since they are outside the scope of the research questions.

Variables

All variables used in the various statistical analyses were either single-item responses (independent variables) or sums of individual item responses from scales (dependent variables).

Independent variables. Information in the data set included a break down of participants across several groups:

Gender. Participants in the data set were identified as "Male," "Female," and "Other Gender Identity" to allow for non-dichotomous responses that acknowledged different gender identities. There were no responses for the "Other" category, so this was converted to a dichotomous variable, "Gender," with responses coded to "0" for "Female" and "1" for "Male."

Semester standing. Participants in the data set were identified as "First Year Undergraduate Student," "Second Year Undergraduate Student," "Third Year Undergraduate Student," "Fourth Year Undergraduate Student," "Fifth Year Undergraduate Student," "Graduate Student," or "Faculty/Staff." There were neither "Fifth Year Undergraduate Students" nor "Graduate Students" in the sample. Only undergraduate students were included in the data set for analysis, since faculty and staff learning outcomes are not the focus of this study. The "Year" variable was created with

the responses coded to "1" for "First Year Undergraduate Student," "2" for "Second Year Undergraduate Student," "3" for "Third Year Undergraduate Student," and "4" for "Fourth Year Undergraduate Student." An initial inspection of that data revealed that there were significantly more first and second year students than third and fourth year students. In order to have sufficient cell sizes for statistical analysis, this variable was collapsed into "YearUL," indicating "Upper" (third and fourth year students) and "Lower" (first and second year students).

Prior program involvement. Participants in the data set answered the question, "Have you previously participated in any of the following programs of the Community Involvement Center (*Urban Immersion*, *International Service Project to Guatemala*, *Alternative Spring Break*, or *Loewenstern Fellowship*)?" The intent of this question was to identify prior experience with the Alternative Spring Break program or other similar co-curricular service-learning programs that included elements of service, education, and reflection. The dichotomous variable "PastInvolvement" was created and responses coded to "0" for "No" and "1" for "Yes."

Past level of service involvement. Participants in the data set answer the question, "Compared to your peers, what do you consider your past level of service involvement?" By referencing the participants' peer group, the hope was to minimize a self-reporting bias and ceiling effect within the responses. The three-level variable "PriorService" was created and responses were coded to "0" for "Low," "1" for "Average," and "3" for "High."

Dependent variables. Each of the dependent variables used in the analyses are derived from the subject scores on the *Alternative Break Participant Survey*. This survey

is composed of three subscales and the score for each was calculated as the sum of the five Likert scale responses. Thus a minimum score of five and a maximum score of twenty-five are possible for each subscale. The constructs measured are "Knowledge in Action Through Service," "Commitment in Action Through Service," and "Faith in Action Through Service" and are noted in the data coding scheme as "K," "C," and "F" respectively. Individual item responses in the data coding are preceded by "S1," "S2," or "S3" (indicating the survey administration) and followed by "Q01" through "Q15," with questions one through five (knowledge), six through ten (commitment), and eleven through fifteen (faith) each representing a different subscale.

Change scores were calculated between each of the survey administrations. Change scores resulting from the entire program were calculated as the difference between the sum of individual subscales for knowledge, commitment, and faith at various survey administrations. The summated scores for knowledge, commitment, and faith were calculated at the first (application), second (pre-trip), and third (post-trip) survey administrations.

The change scores utilized as dependent variables for the full program analysis were calculated by subtracting the summated score from each subscale at the first (application) from the third (post-trip) administrations. The resulting variables were named "KDeltaProgram," "CDeltaProgram," and "FDeltaProgram." Similarly, change scores ("KDeltaTrip," "CDeltaTrip," and "FDeltaTrip") were calculated between the subscales at the third and second survey administrations to analyze the impact of the trip component of the program. Finally, changes scores ("KDeltaPreTrip," "CDeltaPreTrip," and "FDeltaPreTrip") were calculated between the second and first survey

administrations to analyze the impact of the pre-trip educational component of the program. Each of these change scores had minimum and maximum values of -20 and 20, based on the possible individual item change scores of -4 to 4 for each of five questions per subscale.

Quantitative Data Preparation

To conduct the analyses, a number of steps were taken in the following order to prepare the data. The purposes of these steps were to screen the original pool of archival data for relevant cases that could be used to answer the research questions; to limit the impact of socially desirable responses from some participants; and to ensure the integrity of the data across multiple survey administrations.

First, subjects identified as faculty/staff were removed from the pool ($N = 5$). The subjects were included in the program evaluation conducted for institutional purposes, but are not the focus of research questions.

Second, subjects whose unique identifiers did not conform to the proscribed format and could not be matched between survey responses were removed from the pool ($N = 7$). A total of 13 subjects were initially identified for removal, but a subsequent inspection revealed that, although they did not use the specified format, they were consistent in their identifier and survey responses could be matched.

Third, cases with missing data were removed from the pool ($N = 17$). Any cases with missing responses from the surveys were subject to listwise deletion, because the missing responses were random and did not appear to reflect a bias in responses. Due to the small number of cases and high variance in the individual item responses, methods of replacing missing values were not appropriate.

Fourth, subjects with extremely high SDS-17 were removed from the pool (N = 7). Those with SDS-17 scores of M ± 2SD on any individual survey were removed from pool. Those that scored a 14, 15, or 16 out of a possible 16 points were considered to have answered in a socially desirable manner, not necessarily in a way that was reflective of their own personal experiences.

Fifth, non-participants were removed from the pool (N = 105). These respondents were initially included to use as a control group, but there were an insufficient number responding to both surveys one and three from which to draw statistically relevant findings.

Sixth, subjects that completed only 1 survey were removed from the pool (N = 37). Combined survey results from individual test points to identify subjects that had not completed multiple test points. Without multiple survey responses, it is possible neither to compute a change score nor to run a repeated-measures analysis.

A summary of the survey responses and the results of the data preparation process are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Study participants and survey responses.

Total Survey Respondents	243
Staff Participants	-5
Ambiguous IDs	-7
Surveys with Missing Data	-17
SDS-17 Exclusions	-7
Program Non-Participants	-107
Single-Survey Respondents	-37
Useable Survey Respondents (*N*)	65
Completed Survey 1	50
Completed Survey 2	60
Completed Survey 3	50
Completed Surveys 1 and 2 (Research Questions 1 and 4 Data)	45
Completed Surveys 2 and 3 (Research Questions 2 and 4 Data)	45
Completed Surveys 1 and 3 (Research Questions 3 and 4 Data)	35

A cross tabulation utilizing Pearson's chi-squared was conducted to identify any significant differences in the distributions between the sample and responses to the individual survey administrations by gender, class standing, past involvement in the Alternative Spring Break program, or past level of service involvement. The resultant data are reported in Table 2 and indicate that there are no significant differences between the sample and individual survey administration responses by the independent variables.

Table 2. Chi-squared analysis between study participants and survey respondents.

		Sample	Survey 1	χ^2(df)	Survey 2	χ^2(df)	Survey 3	χ^2(df)
Gender	F	33	24		30		25	
	M	32	26		30		25	
	Total	65	50	0.67(1)	60	0.19(1)	50	0.05(1)
Year	L	54	43		50		40	
	U	11	7		10		10	
	Total	65	50	1.32(1)	60	0.04(1)	50	1.46(1)
Past	No	45	37		42		32	
Involvement	Yes	20	13		18		18	
	Total	65	50	2.31(1)	60	0.22(1)	50	2.78(1)
Prior	Low	13	12		13		8	
Service	Ave	32	22		29		25	
	High	20	16		18		17	
	Total	65	50	3.04(2)	60	1.36(2)	50	2.49(2)

Notes: $p < .05$ = *.

Qualitative Data Preparation

The archival data available for analysis included a total of three focus group interviews, with one focusing on each of the *ABPS* constructs, "Commitment in Action Through Service," "Knowledge in Action Through Service," and "Faith in Action Through Service." Upon authorization to utilize data for research purposes from the participating institution, the three transcribed focus group interviews were imported as text files into NVivo Ver. 10. Prior to any content coding and analysis, all focus group

transcripts were coded to include individual nodes for individual questions, question responses, and participants.

As was the case for the quantitative data, there were data included in this set that was specific to the experiences of some staff participants in the program; these data were removed through coding prior to analysis in NVivo. Following the removal of these program participants, there were a total of 5, 6, and 5 students for the respective commitment, knowledge, and faith focus groups.

As part of the initial participant and question coding, the node classification for "People" was set up to include attributes for "Status," "Gender," and "Past Involvement." The first attribute, "Status," contained possible values of "Student," "Faculty/Staff," and "Researcher," so that extraneous content could be removed from analysis. In the case of "Faculty/Staff," these data are not relevant to the research questions in this study; for "Researcher," these data are removed, because repetition of key words in the focus group questions multiple times would skew the data analysis. The second and third attributes, "Gender" and "Past Involvement," were included as independent variables to assist with the identification of trends that could support or refute findings of the quantitative analysis. Additionally, the focus group questions and participant responses to the questions were also coded to individual nodes to allow for quick review.

Participants in the focus group were assigned pseudonyms during the transcription of the interviews. A cross tabulation utilizing Pearson's chi-squared was conducted to identify any significant differences in the distributions between the sample and participation in the focus group interviews by gender or past involvement in the Alternative Spring Break program. Neither semester standing nor prior level of service

involvement were collected as part of the focus group interviews, so data could not be tied to individual program participants through a combination of identifiable criteria.

Table 3 provides basic information about each of the participants and the assigned names.

A cross tabulation utilizing Pearson's chi-squared was conducted to identify any significant differences in the distributions between the sample and participation in the focus group interviews by gender or past involvement in the Alternative Spring Break program. Neither semester standing nor prior level of service involvement were collected as part of the focus group interviews, so data could not be tied to individual program participants through a combination of identifiable criteria.

Table 3. Focus group participant pseudonyms and attributes.

	Commitment Focus Group					Knowledge Focus Group					Faith Focus Group				
Name	Abby	Chloe	Deborah	Emily	Felicia	Hannah	Isabel	Janice	Kelly	Lily	Melody	Adam	Bruce	Noelle	Ophelia	Penny
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	F	F
Past Partic.	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y

The resultant data are reported in Table 4 and indicate that there were some significant differences between the sample and focus group participation by the independent variables. These differences resulted from high participation rates in the focus group interviews by both females and those who had not previously been involved in the Alternative Spring Break program. While some cells do not show significant

differences (Gender, Faith Focus Group; Past Involvement, Commitment Focus Group; and Past Involvement, Knowledge Focus Group), caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions about the entire population based on the overall focus group findings. Additionally, aggregate data from all three focus groups also showed a significant difference between focus group participation and survey respondents by gender; past involvement in the program, however, did not show differences, so data combined from all three focus groups will be examined in light of past participation.

Table 4. Chi-squared analysis between study participants and focus group interview participation.

		Sample	Commitment Focus Group		Knowledge Focus Group		Faith Focus Group		All Focus Groups	
		N	n	χ^2	n	χ^2	n	χ^2	n	χ^2
Gender	F	33	5		6		3		14	
	M	32	0		0		2		2	
	Total	65	5	5.25*	6	6.41*	5	0.19	16	11.46*
Past Inv.	No	54	3		6		1		10	
	Yes	11	2		0		4		6	
	Total	65	5	0.22	6	2.94	5	6.16*	16	0.45

Notes: $p < .05$ = *. All df = 1.

Independent coding. To increase validity of the qualitative findings, multiple reviewers were engaged to conduct coding of the data. The primary coder was the researcher, as he had the most knowledge of the research, the program being studied, and the program participants. Two secondary coders also assisted with the project: one

professional colleague of the researcher at another institution and a recent graduate of a doctoral program with a significant emphasis on qualitative research. The first was selected for her knowledge of alternative break programming models and experience implementing similar programs, although at a different institution type (public university). The second was selected for his knowledge of NVivo and various means of coding data to allow for the most appropriate analyses.

To avoid undue influence of the secondary coders' work by the researcher, they were provided with a limited description of the constructs measured by the *ABPS* along with various examples of application. For example, coders received an overview of "Commitment in Action Through Service" that described the construct as encompassing ways in which participants either 1) engaged in service due to an existing commitment to a particular social issue, or 2) intend to engage in service in the future as a means of strengthening their person commitment to an issue. In the case of this construct, appropriate coding would include examples of participant behaviors such as a personal desire to become more actively involved in their home community or starting a new direct service initiative following participation in an alternative break experience.

Secondary coders were asked to review each of the 30-minute focus groups and code relevant content either to three main constructs as parent nodes or to a separate parent node for non-*ABPS* constructs that emerged. Following this initial coding, they were to create any additional child or sub-nodes that they believed revealed additional patterns relevant to the overall construct. Additionally, coders were instructed to examine the interviews for specific elements through which the participants made

specific connections to the pre-trip education (Component A), the on-trip experience (Component B), or the totality of the program (Component C).

In analyzing the focus group interviews for the various program components (pre-trip education, on-trip experience, and full program), coders were instructed to identify only the references that explicitly or through immediate context discussed a specific component. This coding was particularly challenging where participants referenced their "trip" or "ASB" more generally, but were actually commenting on the trip-based experience or the entire ASB program (including pre-trip education). In other words, participants were not necessarily able to disaggregate their experiences and learning into discrete compartments after the conclusion of the program.

Each coder, including the researcher, completed two full reviews of each focus group interview in this initial round of coding. Following the coding, a node structure report was generated by each coder and submitted to the researcher for review. The researcher then created one master report to compile nodes that one, two, or three coders identified. Those nodes that were identified by all three coders were included in the preliminary coding structure. Those nodes that were identified by only one or two coders were returned to the initial coders with a request to justify briefly the inclusion (for those coded by one individual) or exclusion (for those coded by two individuals) of each. The coders had created some nodes in anticipation of relevant content from the focus group interviews, but were removed from the final coding structure; examples include "Directive to Serve," "Relationship with Creator," and "Social Justice" within the faith construct. In cases where nodes had limited coding (fewer than three references),

attempts were made to merge these nodes into broader categories, unless there was a unique facet to the students' responses.

Following the distribution of all responses to each of the coders, a group Skype session was held to discuss the final coding structure. With the exception of two nodes, all were eventually included or excluded based on agreement of all three coders; the researcher included the remaining two nodes, because the dissenting coder did not voice strong objections to inclusion, only to the parent nodes under which other coders had included them. Coders spent a significant amount of time and discussion on reconciliation of the nodes for these components and were able to reach a consensus on consistent application of the nodes. In each case where there was conflicting assignment to nodes the coders were able to examine the context in which the statement occurred and, after discussion, agree to an assignment consistent with the other references.

The final coding structure consisted of three parent nodes corresponding to the ABPS constructs in Figure 3 and three parent nodes not measured by the ABPS in Figure 4.

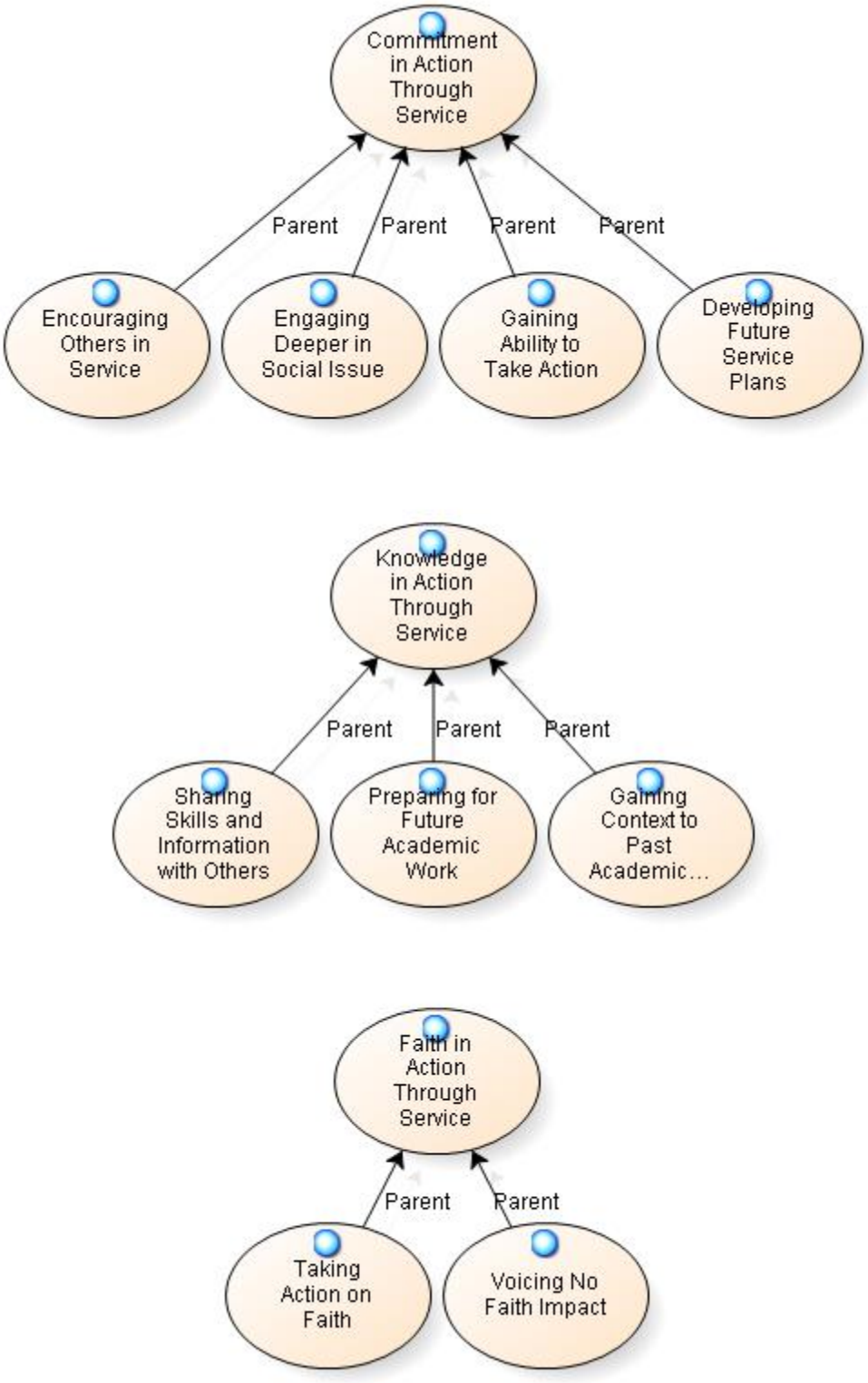

Figure 3. Final coding structure of focus group interviews (*ABPS* constructs).

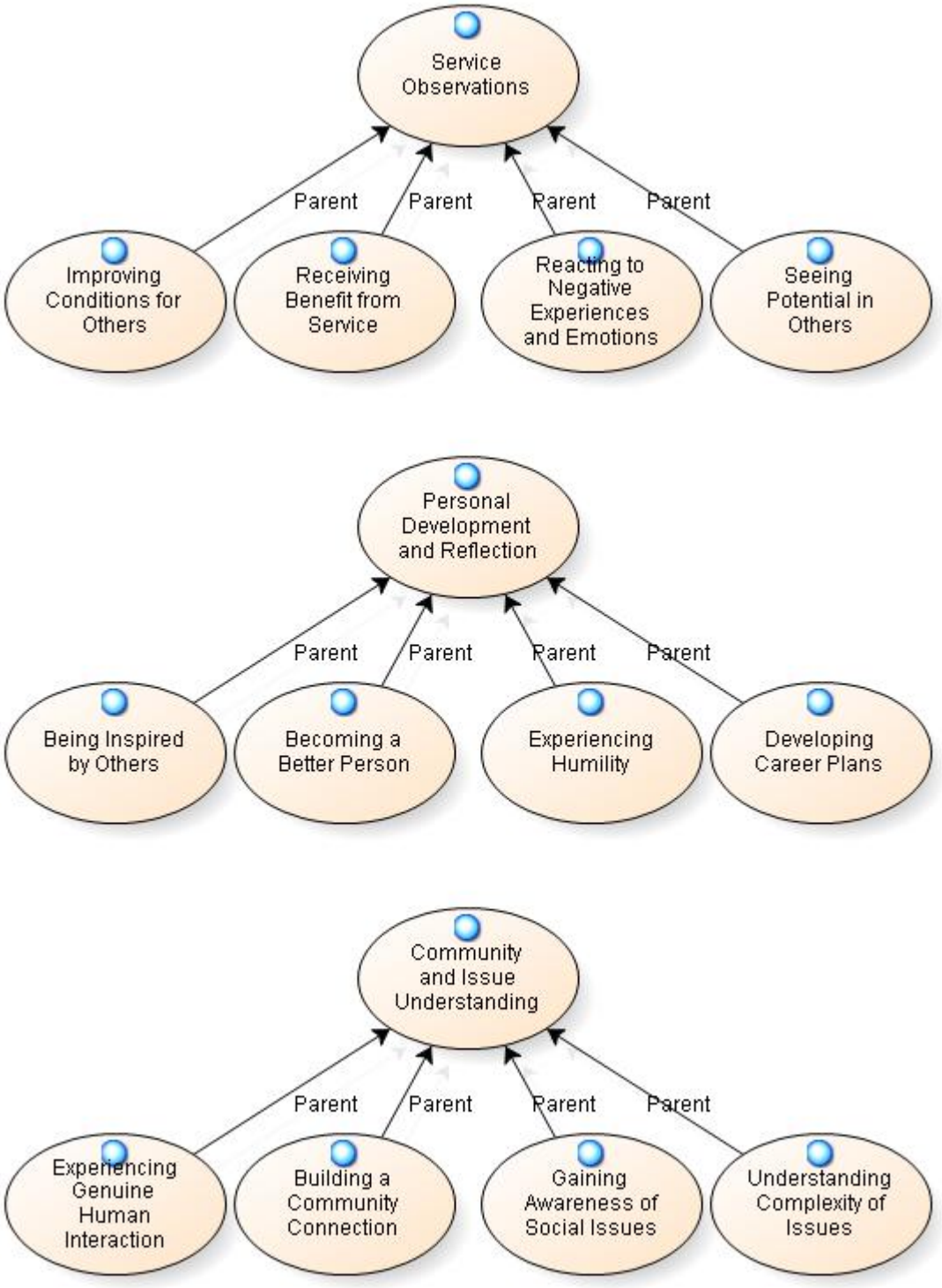

Figure 4. Final coding structure of focus group interviews (non-*ABPS* constructs).

Proposed Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses

The quantitative data collected to answer research questions one through three were organized and analyzed using the Mac version of *IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (*IBM SPSS,* Ver. 20). The qualitative data collected were coded, organized, and analyzed using NVivo and assisted in answering all four research questions. The one common question asked in each focus group informed the answer to research question four, while the rest of the questions informed the answers to research questions one through three.

Research question 1. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience?

The null hypotheses tested for this research question were:

1. There is no difference between mean scores on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and two (after pre-trip education) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.
2. There is no difference between mean scores on the knowledge subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and two (after pre-trip education) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.
3. There is no difference between mean scores on the commitment subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and two

(after pre-trip education) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.

Since this research question addressed three dependent variables (scores on faith, knowledge, and commitment subscales the *ABPS*) and four independent variables (gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, or past level of service involvement), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. These tests examined the change scores for participants after the conclusion of Component A (pre-trip education) on the *ABPS* subscale scores for faith, knowledge, and commitment[3]. Scheffé *post hoc* examinations were conducted for any main effects that involved variables with more than two levels (i.e. past level of service involvement). For any interaction effects discovered, follow up analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to probe further into the differences.

Research question 2. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience?

The null hypotheses tested for this research question were:

1. There is no difference between mean scores on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points two (after pre-trip education) and

[3] Change scores between individual survey points were used in each quantitative analysis rather than a repeated measures design, because few participants ($N = 16$) completed all three surveys and survey administrations were not at equal time intervals.

three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.

2. There is no difference between mean scores on the knowledge subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points two (after pre-trip education) and three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.
3. There is no difference between mean scores on the commitment subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points two (after pre-trip education) and three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.

Since this research question addressed three dependent variables (scores on faith, knowledge, and commitment subscales the *ABPS*) and four independent variables (gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, or past level of service involvement), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. These tests examined the change scores for participants after the conclusion of Component B (pre-trip education) on the *ABPS* subscale scores for faith, knowledge, and commitment. Scheffé *post hoc* examinations were conducted for any main effects that involved variables with more than two levels (i.e. past level of service involvement). For any interaction effects were discovered, follow up analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to probe further into the differences.

Research question 3. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring

break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)?

The null hypotheses tested for this research question were:

1. There is no difference between mean scores on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.
2. There is no difference between mean scores on the knowledge subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.
3. There is no difference between mean scores on the commitment subscale of the *ABPS* for program participants at survey points one (baseline) and three (post-trip) by gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement.

Since this research question addressed three dependent variables (scores on faith, knowledge, and commitment subscales the *ABPS*) and four independent variables (gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, or past level of service involvement), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. These tests examined the change scores for participants after the conclusion of Component B (pre-trip education) on the *ABPS* subscale scores for faith, knowledge, and commitment. Scheffé *post hoc* examinations were conducted for any main effects that involved variables with more than two levels (i.e. past level of service involvement). For any

interaction effects that were discovered, follow up analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to probe further into the differences.

Research question 4. What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants?

The researcher hypothesized that the narratives from the focus group interviews would support the three identified constructs supported by the *ABPS*, but also support the other outcomes identified in the literature and not included currently in the *ABPS*.

As part of the program analysis for institutional purposes, the researcher reviewed the narrative data collected using qualitative methods to determine emergent themes. Member-checking was already conducted as part of the original data collection process, in order to ensure accuracy of the participants' thoughts (Glesne, 1999). Transcribed records from the audio recordings of the focus groups were reviewed multiple times by the researcher for any content regarding students' perceptions of changes in their own faith development, knowledge application, or commitment to act. This thematic data analysis draws on the participants' understanding of changes in themselves and maps recurring themes through shared experiences, behaviors, and ways of thinking (Creswell, 2005). Themes were be coded, organized, and analyzed utilizing NVivo, a software package designed for the processing of qualitative research data.

Additionally, the researcher attempted to identify any other themes (e.g. diversity, self-fulfillment, career development, leadership) that emerged from the data; the purpose of this inductive exploration was to identify possible confounding constructs to be studied

in the future (Creswell, 2005). All themes identified, either within the focus groups or across them, were noted in NVivo.

The qualitative data analyzed by NVivo was used as a point of comparison to quantitative findings. The first question, common to each of the three focus groups, was, "In what ways have you taken action or do you intend to take action in your life as a result of your involvement in the alternative spring break program?" It was hypothesized that the themes identified by this question would support the identification of other themes in the literature, but not currently tested by the *ABPS*. Additionally, the remaining questions for each focus group were expected to support the findings specific their respective topics ("Commitment in Action through Service," "Knowledge in Action Through Service," and "Faith in Action Through Service.") and better inform the quantitative analyses of research questions one through three. Connections identified between the qualitative and quantitative data helped create a common understanding across the research methodologies that supported the learning outcomes associated with participation in co-curricular service-learning programs.

Chapter 4

Results

The goal of this study was to examine the program participation outcomes achieved by participants through the use of a validated instrument, the *Alternative Break Participant Survey* (*ABPS*). Specifically, this instrument examines three constructs relevant to the learning achieved through participation in co-curricular service-learning experiences: "Faith in Action through Service," "Knowledge in Action through Service," and "Commitment in Action through Service."

Analysis of the archival data consisted of two approaches (qualitative and quantitative) that complemented each other to answer research questions one through three. Additionally, qualitative methods alone were used to analyze data and answer research question four. This chapter first presents the general descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and a general description of the model for the qualitative findings. This is followed by the analyses, which are presented in answer to each of the four research questions.

General Descriptions of Findings

As a starting point for analysis and comparison, the researcher first examined the general descriptive statistics for the survey data and the coding of the focus group interviews with respect to the various program components.

Survey data descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics for the data set provide insights into the means and standard deviations of the change score values when compared by each of the independent variables. Means and standard deviations are provided for change score of each subscale between survey points 1 and 2 (PreTrip

Delta), survey points 2 and 3 (Trip Delta), and survey points 1 and 3 (Program Delta). Change scores for each individual subscale could fall within a range of -20 to 20. These values represent the sum of the differences of the five individual items within each subscale between two survey points. For example, if response values were 1 for each of the five items at survey point 1 and 5 for each of the same five items at survey point 3, then the change score for this subscale would be 20.

Of particular note in the descriptive statistics for the survey data, reported in Focus **group interview node references.** The number of references to individual nodes, whether by program component or construct, provides context to the data collected through the focus group interviews. While there is no specific range of references that quantifies an impact as large or small for any individual node, the numbers of references at the intersections between nodes provide points of comparison between different variables. For example, if a matrix showed no male commented on a particular construct, but every female student made reference to that same construct multiple times, this would be an indication of a patter for the researcher to explore.

Table 5, were the total change score values associated with the faith subscale: 2.52 (PreTrip Delta), 3.44 (Trip Delta), and 4.40 (Program Delta). The means of the changes scores were consistent with the other subscales, but there was significantly more variability among the scores on this particular subscale. The standard deviations for the commitment subscale (2.06, 1.72, and 2.01) and knowledge subscales (2.30, 1.66, and 2.42) appeared significantly lower for the same respective program component change scores. Additionally, the mean change scores for the knowledge (.53) and faith (.58) subscales resulting from the trip component of the program and knowledge (.43) subscale

change score resulting from the entire program are slightly higher than other construct/component combinations, which range from -.31 to .17.

Focus group interview node references. The number of references to individual nodes, whether by program component or construct, provides context to the data collected through the focus group interviews. While there is no specific range of references that quantifies an impact as large or small for any individual node, the numbers of references at the intersections between nodes provide points of comparison between different variables. For example, if a matrix showed no male commented on a particular construct, but every female student made reference to that same construct multiple times, this would be an indication of a patter for the researcher to explore.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for change scores by independent variable.

			PreTrip Delta			Trip Delta			Program Delta		
			K	C	F	K	C	F	K	C	F
Gender	F	μ	0.19	-0.71	-0.71	0.73	-0.59	0.41	0.63	-1.06	-1.38
		σ	2.38	1.98	2.31	1.78	1.59	1.82	2.85	2.08	2.78
	N			21			22			16	
	M	μ	-0.33	0.42	0.38	0.35	-0.04	0.74	0.26	0.79	1.47
		σ	2.26	2.02	2.63	1.56	1.82	4.53	2.05	1.55	5.11
	N			24			23			19	
Past Inv	No	μ	-0.24	-0.09	-0.5	0.66	-0.28	0.72	0.25	-0.42	0.29
		σ	2.43	2.07	2.22	1.5	1.58	4.01	2.63	2.26	4.89
	N			39			39			29	
	Yes	μ	0.36	-0.18	1	0.31	-0.38	0.31	0.82	0.73	-0.09
		σ	1.91	2.14	3.13	1.96	2	2.15	1.94	1.01	3.27
	N			6			6			6	
Prior Service	Low	μ	0.33	0.42	-0.17	0.63	0.5	-0.63	1	1.71	0
		σ	3.31	1.56	3.35	1.3	1.41	1.19	3.11	1.98	4.08
	N			34			29			24	
	Av	μ	-0.74	0.05	-0.16	0.32	-0.68	1.09	-0.07	-0.47	1.07
		σ	2	1.81	1.46	1.46	1.52	4.45	2.19	1.19	5.59
	N			11			16			11	
	High	μ	0.43	-0.79	-0.07	0.8	-0.2	0.47	0.69	-0.54	-0.77
		σ	1.45	2.64	3	2.11	2.04	2.36	2.36	2.37	2.83

	N			12			8			7	
Year	L	μ	-0.18	-0.08	-0.1	0.47	-0.5	0.53	0.31	-0.31	0.14
UL		σ	2.24	2.11	2.58	1.75	1.75	3.77	2.41	1.93	4.81
	N			19			22			15	
	U	μ	0.5	-0.33	-0.33	0.78	0.44	0.78	1	1.17	0.33
		σ	2.88	1.86	2.25	1.3	1.42	1.72	2.61	2.14	1.37
	N			14			15			13	
		μ	-0.09	-0.11	-0.13	0.53	-0.31	0.58	0.43	-0.06	0.17
		σ	2.3	2.06	2.52	1.66	1.72	3.44	2.42	2.01	4.4
Total	N			45			45			35	

Notes: K = Knowledge subscale. C = Commitment subscale. F = Faith subscale. Means and standard deviations are provided for change score of each subscale between survey points 1 and 2 (PreTrip Delta), survey points 2 and 3 (Trip Delta), and survey points 1 and 3 (Program Delta).

As a point of comparison, Figure 5 provides a graphical representation of the total number of references to the non-*ABPS* that were not coded to the program components. These data are directly relevant to research question four, but also provide context to the comparable data for research questions one through three, which are references to the various program components. There were 25 total references, broken down by the parent nodes “Community and Issues Understanding” (12), “Personal Development and Reflection” (6), and “Service Observations” (7).

Figure 5. Non-*ABPS* constructs not coded to program components.

By contrast, the focus group interview participants referenced the constructs measured by the *ABPS* a total of 22 times in connection with the pre-trip education (1), on-trip experience (5), and full program components (16) of the ASB experiences compared to 1, 17, and 15 references to non-*ABPS* constructs in the same respective components. Table 6 provides a full representation of the parent and child nodes and the number of respective references that were identified within each component of the

program for both the *ABPS* constructs. A similar table for the non-*ABPS* constructs by program component is presented later in response to research question four.

Table 6. References to *ABPS* constructs by program component matrix.

	Pre-Trip Education	On-Trip Experience	Entire Program
Commitment in Action Through Service	1	4	8
Developing Future Service Plans	0	1	2
Encouraging Others in Service	0	0	3
Engaging Deeper in Social Issue	0	2	3
Gaining Ability to Take Action	1	1	0
Faith in Action Through Service	0	1	0
Taking Action on Faith	0	1	0
Voicing No Faith Impact	0	0	0
Knowledge in Action Through Service	0	0	8
Gaining Context to Past Academic Work	0	0	1
Preparing for Future Academic Work	0	0	7
Sharing Skills and Information with Others	0	0	0
Total References	1	5	16

Full program and pre-trip education component references remained fairly consistent across the two sets of constructs, while the on-trip experience component references were dramatically lower for the *ABPS* constructs than the non-*ABPS*

constructs. Additionally, the total number of references to the pre-trip education component was also significantly lower than for the full program component.

Based on the chi-square analysis conducted between the focus groups participants and full pool of respondents by gender and past program participation (Table 4), qualitative findings are only reported based on these independent variables when there was no significant difference between the groups. These findings will include past program participation for the Commitment and Knowledge focus group and gender for the Faith focus group. Aggregate data are included in the results, but not separated by attribute when there was a finding of significance, as was the case for gender.

Research Question 1

What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience?

Quantitative results. The first step of this analysis was to conduct a MANOVA with 3 dependent variables (KDeltaPreTrip, CDeltaPreTrip, and FDeltaPreTrip) and 4 independent variables (Gender, Year UL, Past Involvement, and Prior Service). Since the design is unbalanced and MANOVA analyses are based on an assumption of equality of covariance matrices, Box's Test was used to test this assumption. Box's Test was successfully passed ($F(24, 1334.50) = 1.38$, Box's $M = 46.60$, $p = .105$). Multivariate analysis revealed one significant main effect (Past Involvement) and two significant interaction effects in Table 7.

Table 7. Multivariate test for pre-trip component.

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df
Past Involvement	.28	3.56*	3.00	28.00
Gender * Prior Service	.41	2.46*	6.00	58.00
Past Involvement * Prior Service	.49	3.09*	6.00	58.00

$p < .05$ = *.

Prior to examining the results from the ANOVA, it is necessary to determine if there is equality of the error variances, since this is one of the assumptions of ANOVA and t-tests and is addressed by Levene's test in Table 8. If the resulting p-value from Levene's test is less than .05, the differences in variances are not likely to have occurred based on a random sampling from a population of equal variances. For each of the variables (KDeltaPreTrip, CDeltaPreTrip, and FDeltaPreTrip), the findings from Levene's test are not significant ($p > .05$), so the null hypothesis of equal variance is retained and it is concluded that there is not a difference between the variances in the population.

Table 8. Levene's test for pre-trip component.

	F	df1	df2	p
KDeltaProgram	1.04	15.00	19.00	.457
CDeltaProgram	1.32	15.00	19.00	.283
FDeltaProgram	1.36	15.00	19.00	.261

An examination of the between-subjects effects yields that the difference for each of these effects is within the faith subscale (FDeltaPreTrip) of the results in Table 9.

Table 9. Tests of between-subjects effects for pre-trip component.

	DV	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
PastInvolvement	KDeltaPreTrip	3.26	1.00	3.26	.63
	CDeltaPreTrip	1.78	1.00	1.78	.40
	FDeltaPreTrip	44.52	1.00	44.52	10.96*
Gender * PriorService	KDeltaPreTrip	21.62	2.00	10.81	2.10
	CDeltaPreTrip	11.34	2.00	5.67	1.27
	FDeltaPreTrip	35.90	2.00	17.95	4.42*
PastInvolvement * PriorService	KDeltaPreTrip	10.26	2.00	5.13	.99
	CDeltaPreTrip	10.52	2.00	5.26	1.17
	FDeltaPreTrip	69.10	2.00	34.55	8.51*

$p < .05$ = *.

For the main effect (PastInvolvement), no post hoc test was necessary, because the variable only had two levels ("No" and "Yes"). An examination of the means for this variable showed mean change scores on the faith subscale (FDeltaPreTrip) of -.50 and 1.00 for those subjects that did not have prior involvement in a similar program ("No") and for those subjects that did have prior involvement with a similar program ("Yes"), respectively. This means that students who had previously participated in the ASB program scored significantly higher on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* after the pre-trip education component of the program.

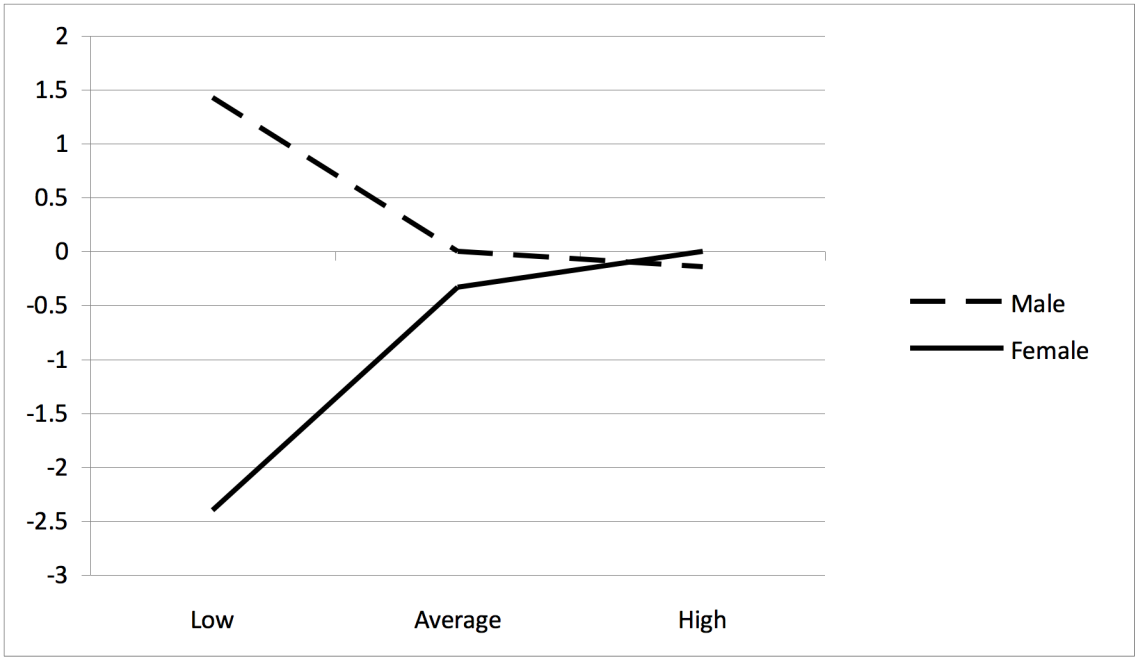

Figure 6. Line graph showing change score on the faith subscale for the pre-trip component of the program (FDeltaPreTrip) by prior level of service commitment (PriorService) for male and female participants.

Figure 6 suggests that male subjects who indicated a low level of past service involvement had a significantly higher change score on the faith subscale after the pre-trip education component of the program than female subjects. For both average and high levels of past level of service involvement, there was no significant difference by gender after the pre-trip education component of the program.

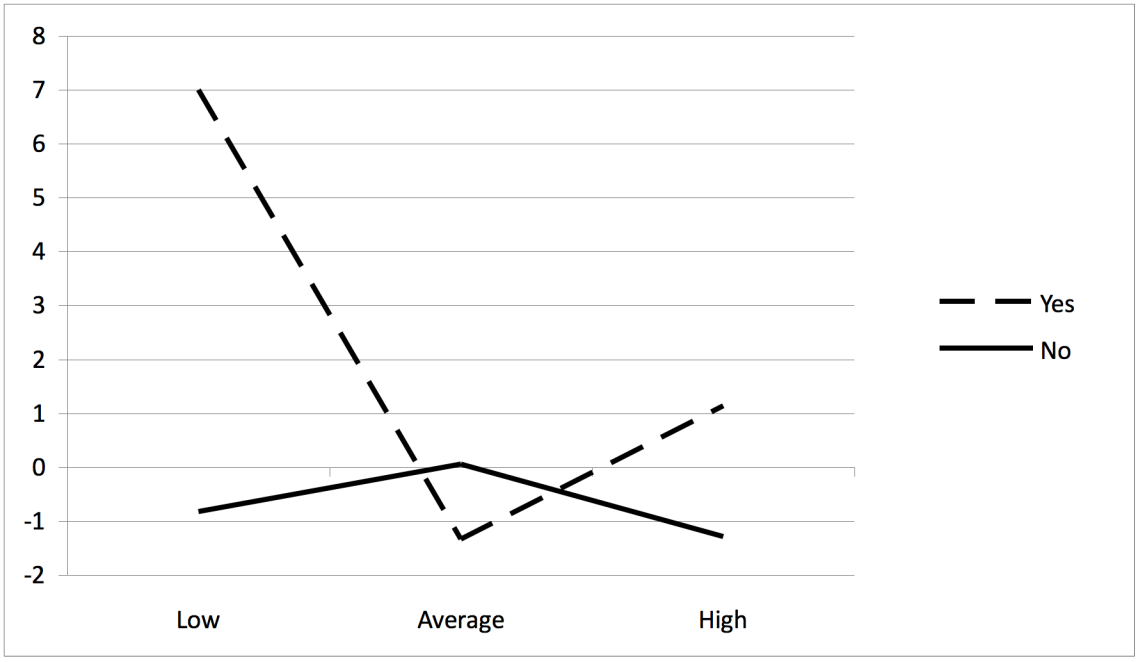

Figure 7. Line graph showing change score on the faith subscale for the pre-trip component of the program (FDeltaPreTrip) by prior level of service commitment (PriorService) for those who have and have not previously participated in a similar program.

Figure 7 suggests that subjects who had previously been involved in a similar program and indicated either a low or high level of past level of service involvement had a significantly higher change score on the faith subscale after the pre-trip education component of the program than those who had not previously been involved in a similar program. For average levels of service involvement, there was no significant difference by past participant in similar programs after the pre-trip education component of the program.

Qualitative results. To analyze data from the focus group interviews relevant to the pre-trip education component, the researcher constructed a matrix to identify coding intersections between the *ABPS* construct nodes (parent and child) and both participant

attributes (gender and past program participation), including only those references coded to the pre-trip education component. This analysis yielded only one reference from a first time participant in the ASB program and was coded to the "Gaining Ability to Take Action." As part of her response, Hannah indicated that she felt the videos she had watched and the discussions in which she participated prior to her trip provided her with tools that could support her responses to others when questioned about her beliefs and actions.

The lack of coding, both in terms of the constructs measured by the *ABPS* and the component of the program, is salient. The absence of references in the narratives, in and of itself, provides some insight into the participants' perceptions of their learning associated with the program components and measured constructs.

Research Question 2

What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience?

Quantitative results. The first step of this analysis was to conduct a MANOVA with 3 dependent variables (KDeltaTrip, CDeltaTrip, and FDeltaTrip) and 4 independent variables (Gender, YearUL, PastInvolvement, and PriorService). Since the design is unbalanced and MANOVA analyses are based on an assumption of equality of covariance matrices, Box's Test was used to test this assumption. Box's Test was successfully passed ($F(18, 1042.38) = 2.22$, Box's $M = 58.93$, $p = .002$). Given the narrow margin by which this test was passed ($p > .001$), Pillai's Trace will be utilized as

the criterion for the multivariate tests. Multivariate analysis revealed no significant main effects and one significant interaction effect (Gender * PastInvolvement) ($F (3, 25) = 4.02$, Pillai's Trace = .33, $p = .018$, partial $\eta 2 = .33$).

Prior to examining the results from the ANOVA, it is necessary to determine if there is equality of the error variances, since this is one of the assumptions of ANOVA and t-tests and is addressed by Levene's test in Table 10. If the resulting p-value from Levene's test is less than .05, the differences in variances are not likely to have occurred based on a random sampling from a population of equal variances. For each of the variables (KDeltaTrip, CDeltaTrip, and FDeltaTrip), the findings from Levene's test are not significant ($p > .05$), so the null hypothesis of equal variance is retained and it is concluded that there is not a difference between the variances in the population.

Table 10. Levene's test for trip component.

	F	df1	df2	p
KDeltaTrip	.67	17.00	27.00	.808
CDeltaTrip	1.77	17.00	27.00	.097
FDeltaTrip	1.89	17.00	27.00	.067

An examination of the between-subjects effects in

Table 11 yields that the difference for each of these effects is within both the knowledge (KDeltaTrip) and commitment (CDeltaTrip) subscales of the results.

Table 11. Tests of between-subjects effects for trip component.

	DV	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Gender*PastInvolvement	KDeltaTrip	22.70	1.00	22.70	10.19	.004*
	CDeltaTrip	13.56	1.00	13.56	4.48	.044*
	FDeltaTrip	17.32	1.00	17.32	1.14	.296

$p < .05$ = *.

Figure 8 suggests that male subjects who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly higher change score on the knowledge subscale after the trip component of the program than those males who had not previously been involved in a similar program. Conversely, female subjects who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly lower change score on the knowledge subscale after the trip component of the program than those females who had not previously been involved in a similar program.

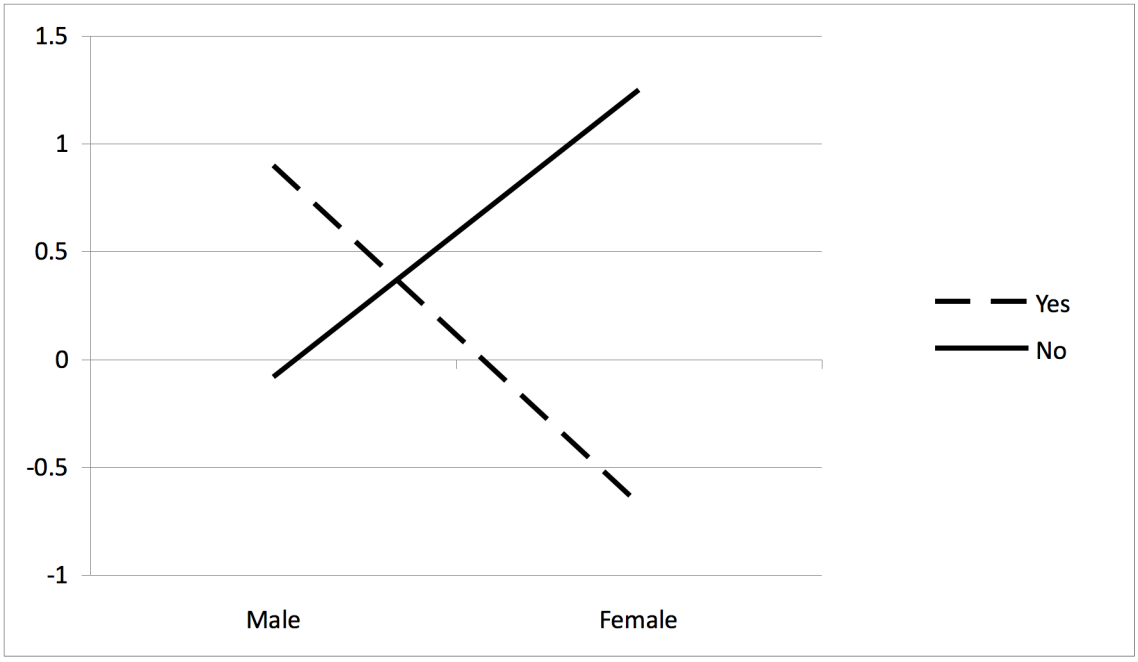

Figure 8. Line graph showing change score on the knowledge subscale for the trip component of the program (KDeltaTrip) by gender for those who have and have not previously participated in a similar program.

Figure 9 suggests that male subjects who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly higher change score on the commitment subscale after the trip component of the program than those males who had not previously been involved in a similar program. Conversely, female subjects who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly lower change score on the commitment subscale than those females who had not previously been involved in a similar program.

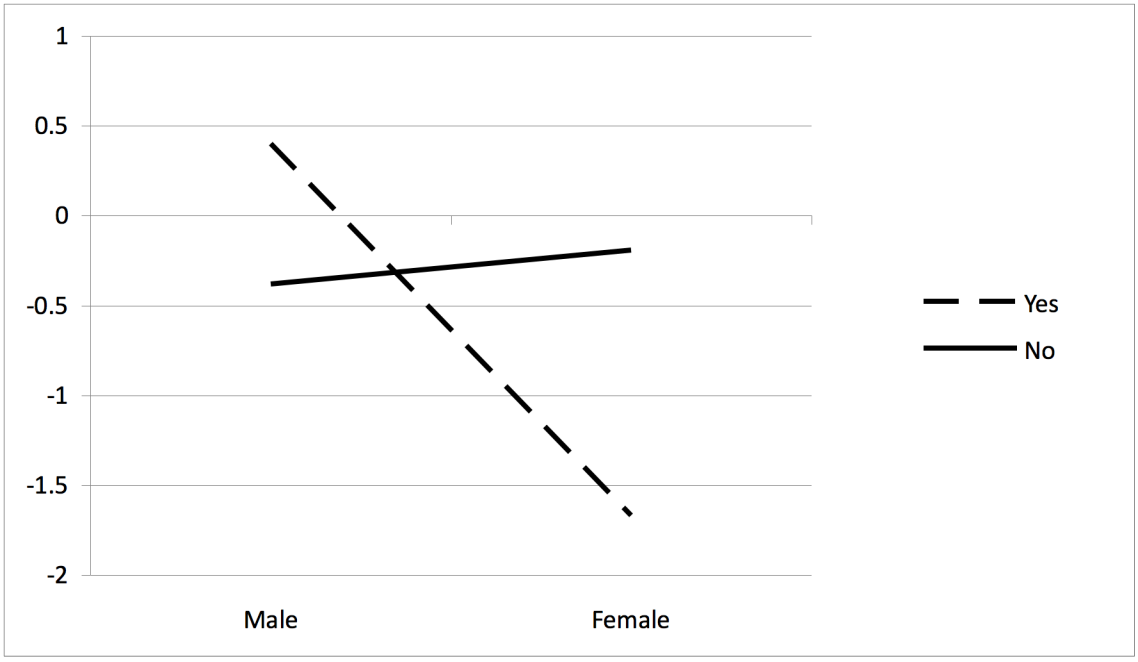

Figure 9. Line graph showing change score on the commitment subscale for the trip component of the program (CDeltaTrip) by gender for those who have and have not previously participated in a similar program.

Qualitative results. To analyze data from the focus group interviews relevant to the on-trip experience component, the researcher constructed a matrix to identify coding intersections between the *ABPS* construct nodes (parent and child) and both participant attributes (gender and past program participation), including only those references coded to the on-trip experience component. This matrix yielded five references, with none coded to "Knowledge in Action Through Service" and only one coded to "Faith in Action Through Service."

The majority of references coded were from first time program participants identifying the commitment construct. Among these individuals, both Deborah and Adam commented on the positive emotions they associated with their service that strengthened their commitment to future service. One noted that, "I felt that I had a

small, but meaningful impact, and so it inspired me to try to do more things, even if they're small." Another was more explicit about future plans, discussing the likelihood of returning to the same site for a week of service over the summer. The sole focus group participant in this matrix that had previously been involved in the program, Bruce, viewed his service as helping him build "a really strong sense of responsibility" and tied this directly to his personal faith development. He viewed his increasing faith as a communal growth experience with the group, allowing everyone to "grow together."

Research Question 3

What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)?

Quantitative results. The first step of this analysis was to conduct a MANOVA with 3 dependent variables (KDeltaProgram, CDeltaProgram, and FDeltaProgram) and 4 independent variables (Gender, YearUL, PastInvolvement, and PriorService). Since the design is unbalanced and MANOVA analyses are based on an assumption of equality of covariance matrices, Box's Test was used to test this assumption. Box's Test was successfully passed ($F(12, 492.01) = 1.61$, Box's $M = 32.33$, $p = .086$). Multivariate analysis revealed neither significant main effect nor significant interaction effects. This indicates that neither the individual independent variables nor any interaction between them were responsible for differences in the individual subscale change scores as a result of the full ASB program.

Qualitative results. To analyze data from the focus group interviews relevant to the entire program component, the researcher constructed a matrix to identify coding intersections between the *ABPS* construct nodes (parent and child) and both participant attributes (gender and past program participation), including only those references coded to the full program. This matrix in With respect to the "Commitment in Action Through Service" construct, there were several similar themes expressed by the participants. Participants not only gained a deeper understanding of social issues through their service, but also made the commitment to engaging others in service to help address social problems. They identified the motivations to "do more volunteering," "make social issues a bigger part of my life," and "get more involved with things on campus related to [environmentalism]." Only the participant, Ophelia, who had previously been involved in the program, took this personal motivation to serve and carried it further, into the desire to engage others and encourage their involvement. She indicated that she was encouraging her peers to get involved and "take up this issue," because she believed that the more people knew about it, the more likely the situation was to change.

Table 12 yielded many more references from those participating in their first Alternative Spring Break, but this is tempered by the high percentage of focus group participants with this attribute. Additionally, there were no references to the faith construct by participants, regardless of past participation in the program. As mentioned earlier, this absence of coding is in itself a notable result.

With respect to the "Commitment in Action Through Service" construct, there were several similar themes expressed by the participants. Participants not only gained a deeper understanding of social issues through their service, but also made the commitment to engaging others in service to help address social problems. They identified the motivations to "do more volunteering," "make social issues a bigger part of my life," and "get more involved with things on campus related to [environmentalism]." Only the participant, Ophelia, who had previously been involved in the program, took this personal motivation to serve and carried it further, into the desire to engage others and encourage their involvement. She indicated that she was encouraging her peers to get involved and "take up this issue," because she believed that the more people knew about it, the more likely the situation was to change.

Table 12. References to *ABPS* construct by gender and prior involvement for Component C matrix.

	Prior Involvement	
	First ASB	Not First ASB
Commitment in Action Through Service	6	2
Developing Future Service Plans	1	1
Encouraging Others in Service	2	1
Engaging Deeper in Social Issue	3	0
Gaining Ability to Take Action	0	0
Faith in Action Through Service	0	0
Taking Action on Faith	0	0
Voicing No Faith Impact	0	0
Knowledge in Action Through Service	8	0
Gaining Context to Past Academic Work	1	0
Preparing for Future Academic Work	7	0
Sharing Skills and Information with Others	0	0
Total References	14	

Within the "Knowledge in Action Through Service" construct, all references were from those students that were participating in an Alternative Spring Break trip for the first time. For one student, Melody, her service experience engendered an ability to connect with her prior academic coursework in a new way or, in her words, with "more academic understanding." All other participant references to this construct clustered around their future academic endeavors. For some, it was the contemplated change of major, addition

of a minor, or enrollment in issue-based courses during their undergraduate program; for others, it was exploration of a graduate degree program or continuing education in the social issue after graduation.

Of note was the pattern that students recognized academic major does not necessarily create a linear path to graduation; despite a strong inclination towards their selected majors, several participants referenced taking on seemingly unrelated minors and coursework to provide an interdisciplinary approach to their education. Two students, Melody and Kelly, referenced adding a minor in the study of poverty and social justice, even though unrelated to their majors. Isabel noted that, "I'm a Hispanic Studies major, so I'm not studying sociology at all, but I have really gotten interested in that after coming back from my ASB." Finally, Lily discussed her lack of knowledge of the criminal justice system prior to her trip, but is now "planning on take the criminology course on campus next year."

Research Question 4

What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants?

Qualitative results. To analyze data from the focus group interviews relevant to this research question, the researcher constructed a matrix to identify coding intersections between the non-*ABPS* construct nodes (parent and child) and program components. These data are presented in

Table 13 .

Table 13. References to non-*ABPS* constructs by program component matrix.

	Pre-Trip Education	On-Trip Experience	Entire Program
Community / Issue Understanding	1	7	12
Building a Community Connection	0	1	1
Experiencing Genuine Human Interaction	0	4	1
Gaining Awareness of Social Issues	0	1	7
Understanding Complexity of Issues	1	1	3
Personal Development and Reflection	0	3	1
Becoming a Better Person	0	1	0
Being Inspired by Others	0	1	0
Developing Career Plans	0	1	1
Experiencing Humility	0	0	0
Service Observations	0	8	2
Improving Conditions for Others	0	1	0
Reacting to Negative Experiences/Emotions	0	5	1
Receiving Benefit from Service	0	1	1
Seeing Potential in Others	0	1	0
Total References by Component	1	18	15

While the total number of references remained fairly consistent with respect to the on-trip experience and the entire program, the distribution of the references among the constructs varied. The constructs “Service Observations” and “Community and Issue

Understanding" were equally referenced in the on-trip experience, while "Community and Issue Understanding" accounted for 80% of references for the entire program. These findings translate into a few important points. First, consistent with earlier findings for the *ABPS* constructs, the pre-trip education component of the program is referenced very few times by participants. Second, when commenting on the impact of the trip-based component of their experience, participants were most aware of the interactions they had with others while serving and the broader context of the notion of service (both positive and negative implications). Third, when referencing their participation in the ASB program, participants, by a significant majority over other constructs, discussed their own awareness of the social issues they were working to address, particularly the complexity and interconnectedness of problems about which they had previously been unaware.

Results from pre-trip education component. As was the case for the pre-trip education component, there was only one reference coded to the non-*ABPS* constructs. Hannah referenced some of the pre-trip educational activities organized by her trip's Site Leaders, including documentary videos and group discussions, as instrumental in helping her understanding the complexity of her trip's specific focus, physical disabilities. These activities helped her consider new perspectives, particularly those that "hadn't really been important" to her prior to selection as a program participant. The lack of more references to this program component is a relevant finding, because it indicates an absence of connections in the participants' minds between pre-trip education and some of the hypothesized learning outcomes.

Results from on-trip experience component. For the on-trip experience component, participants were able to articulate much more clearly the results of their

engagement. Participants acknowledged impact mainly in two areas, "Community and Issue Understanding" and "Service Observation," with the over half of the references to "Experiencing Genuine Human Interaction" and "Reacting to Negative Experiences and Emotions" in their respective parent nodes.

Community and issue understanding. The participants' references covered the range of child nodes, including "Experiencing Genuine Human Interaction," "Gaining Awareness of Social Issues," "Understanding Complexity of Issues," and "Building a Community Connection." The most salient point for students during this component of the experience was their time connecting with individual community members. Students learned first-hand the impact that societal problems can have on individuals by listening to their stories and sharing time together.

Throughout the focus group interviews, students referenced "actual" people: "actual immigrants," "actual poor people," "actual HIV-positive individuals," and "actual environmentalists." They contrasted these individuals and experiences with them to the theoretical or academic knowledge and/or pre-conceived notions they had about individuals impacted by particular social problems. These experiences with specific individuals also helped put their service in context and give personal meaning to the impact on an individual or small group of community members. For example, Adam, a first-time ASB participant, noted that, "I might not have reached out to all the children in the world and instilled [a] love [of] the environment and science, but I did reach out to the eight boys I had in my cabin." Another first-time participant, Felicia, echoed this sentiment when she discussed her experience. "Hearing what the actual immigrants were saying about their experiences with immigration, there were so many stories and little

factors about [the trips from their home countries] that humanized it and made you see things in a completely different perspective."

It was through the trip-based component of the experience that students were also able to see the complexity of many of society's problems. While living and working in communities that faced the problems on a daily basis they were able to gain a greater understanding of interconnectedness of many issues. This also led to feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of problems. Abby felt that she only saw a small piece of a very big problems and she was doing a disservice to those with whom she spent time by intimating that she truly understood their lives. "I went on a trip and I saw these things for one week and I know everything. I don't," was her way of processing the experience. Isabel also articulated this complexity and noted how many students the program impacted. "I realized that there are so many pervasive social issues and that ASB brings a lot of different ones to light [for] different people."

Finally, participants were also able to identify specific experiences on their trips that helped them feel connected to their host communities, but they carried that connection with them back to campus and anticipated applying it to their home communities. One student, Ophelia, talked about engaging in Houston upon her return and starting to "volunteer in the schools, because we were surprisingly able to make such wonderful connections with the kids in a week."

Service observations. The participants' references covered the range of child nodes, including "Reacting to Negative Experiences and Emotions," "Improving Conditions for Others," "Receiving Benefit from Service," and "Seeing Potential in Others." The area most referenced by participants covered a range of responses to

negative experiences or emotions related to their service and host community, either due to the minimal impact or futility of their work. These reactions involved questioning of the value of their service and their ability to make an impact in one week and understanding previously unnoticed biases, but in nearly all circumstances represented an optimistic view of the future. A common theme for several participants was that their one week of service would not change the world or, as one participant, Adam, mentioned, "It's like adding up small, meaningful actions that I take and hopefully inspiring other to do the same, because one week might not have changed the world, but a week multiple times a year can." Ophelia, returning to participate in a second ASB, made this connection more explicitly to the children in her program. "I think ASB was helpful in planting a seed and due to the inquisitiveness of the children with whom I was working for my trip, I think that the social issue that I was involved in will perhaps be resolved the more the seeds are planted."

The remaining references in this parent node continued on the optimistic theme of observations about service outcomes. Lily, a first-time participant, saw for the first time an opportunity to "change the education system to break this cycle and get the kids out of these bad situations." Emily noted that she was receiving a benefit from the community greater than what she was giving through her time and service. "They're helping you so much more than you're helping them and so many topics we touched on during our trip really just transmitted to my daily life." Deborah, a program veteran, continued this optimistic theme and said, "Seeing the potential of all the students in the elementary school and this year in the high school and middle schools really made we want to give to that community." Another veteran participant, Penny, had personally seen the changes

that can happen after a trip, based on her prior experience with the program. She had seen peers finishing their trip and "wanting to come back to campus start working on that social issue . . . [and make] such a bigger impact than donating or just writing it off as we're not going to do anything." She knew that despite the fact that the problems seemed insurmountable, anyone could take meaningful action.

Personal development and reflection. This least-referenced non-*ABPS* construct contained participant references to both the "Becoming a Better Person" and "Developing Career Plans" child nodes. As individual references, they may be anomalous and not represent a greater theme or trend among program participants, but bear noting. Emily, a first-time participant, was very vocal about the personal change she saw in herself as a result of the trip component and indicated that it had strengthened her "personal commitment to be a better person in the ways that [she] can." Another first-time participant, Kelly, reflected on the impact of the trip on her future career aspirations and tied her new interest in Teach for America to specific experiences on her trip that "opened [her] eyes to all the issues that education can solve."

Results from entire program. For the full program, participants were able to connect more directly to the community or social problem and understand its impact on them personally, individuals in a community, and a larger context, whether that be the state, country, or world. Participants acknowledged impact mainly in "Community and Issue Understanding," with significantly fewer references to "Personal Development and Reflection" and "Service Observations."

Community and issue understanding. The participants' references clustered under two of the child nodes, "Gaining Awareness of Social Issues" and "Understanding

Complexity of Issues," with these two referenced in over 80% of the coding for this parent node. These content areas are those though which participants could most clearly see a change in themselves. Students frequently discussed personal changes in their awareness as well as an understanding of and ability to discuss areas of social concern. "I've spent hours doing research online about [criminal justice], but learned so much more in a week with people," said one program veteran, Emily. She also connected this to her own personal curiosity and indicated "the ASB program in general has made me more curious about other social issues." Additionally, several students noted their lack of knowledge prior to entering the program and the significant progress they made in issue-based understanding following their participation.

Several students reiterated this increased knowledge base and moved beyond superficial knowledge to acknowledge their greater understanding of the complexity of issues. One student on a trip focused on HIV/AIDS awareness noted the interconnectedness "with so many different factors, like socioeconomic status and also in regards to the HIV transmitted sexually." She had also never considered the impact that HIV status could have on long-term relationships, love, and emotional health. Melody, a first-time program participant, took away a similar lesson from the program when she noted that her experience was "changing the atmosphere surrounding the social issue through discourse." Bruce, an alumnus of the program, connected this on a more personal level when he said, "We gained more ideas like how we can do better to improve our self-awareness about certain issues." He went on to say that "we can still change some part of the world, even though its small, but we can definitely act on something." This desire to gain more knowledge and information also crossed the

boundaries of the social with which they worked on their trips. Emily noted that her ASB experience had "made [her] more curious about other social issues" and she intended to seek out new ways to gain knowledge.

Service observations. Participants continued a trend noted in the trip component of the program and referenced the benefits the received from the program in comparison to the benefits imparted on their host communities. "When I went into the ASB program, I was excited to give back and make a difference, but I think every time I do some volunteer work or community service, you realize how much you're taking instead of actually give back," was the reaction of Emily as a first-time participant. Penny, a program veteran, reinforced this notion by commenting that, "I feel like going on ASB has shown me that it's so much more than [a vacation] and we're not going to really change the world, but I think that when you so something like that you make a spark."

Personal development and reflection. Finally, there was a moment of career clarification for one student when she noted that it helped elimination an option for her. "This trip for me really solidified my feeling that I can't be a teacher, which was kind of hard to accept, but I realized that my role in education would [be] more like an administrative role." While several students made note of experiences that affirmed their career choices, this career focusing by elimination also had a positive result for the student.

Summary of Results

The findings of this mixed methodological approach provided a more complete understanding of the impact of gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement on the learning outcomes of alternative spring

break program participants across multiple constructs. The strengths and weaknesses of each approach resulted in some findings that were supported across both methodologies, as well as complementary findings that could not be drawn individually from either methodology individually.

The survey data suggest that during the pre-trip component of the program, students' faith development is influenced by their past involvement in similar programs, as well as by a combination of their gender and prior level of service involvement. At the same time, few students actively recalled during the focus group interviews that this component of the program impacted their experience.

The survey findings also suggest that during the trip component of the program, students experience outcomes associated with their commitment to take action and knowledge. These outcomes are influenced by a combination of gender and past involvement in similar programs. Narratives from the focus group interviews reinforced the connection between past program involvement and students' commitment to take action.

With respect to outcomes from the entire program, the survey data suggest that none of the independent variables (gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement) influence outcomes associated with faith development, commitment to take action, or knowledge. The focus group interviews reiterate these findings for faith development, but make a strong case for changes in students' commitment to take action and understanding and application of community-based knowledge.

Finally, the data support the hypothesis that there are additional constructs beyond those measured by the *ABPS* that impact student learning and development, particularly as experiences related to students' understanding of communities and social issues. Another finding from this area suggested that students did not perceive the pre-trip education component of the program to have significantly contributed to their learning and development.

Together, these combined findings from the four research questions lead to several conclusions. First, students that participate in this particular type of co-curricular service learning experience achieve learning and development outcomes across a range of constructs. Second, practitioners in the field could make changes to the content and delivery of different components of alternative spring break experiences to change the learning and development outcomes achieved by student participants. Third, research in the field of co-curricular service-learning can still address many unanswered questions about the learning and development outcomes achieved by students and on-going research is necessary to improve program quality and consistency.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study focused on the learning and development outcomes achieved by students participating in a co-curricular service-learning experience, specifically an alternative spring break trip. This chapter will first address the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings, examining the findings of each individual research question in light of existing research and gaps in research. Second is a discussion of the limitations of the present study, addressing both the study design and the available data. Third, there are suggested areas of continuing research that will add to the body of knowledge surrounding alternative spring break programs specifically and co-curricular service learning more generally. Fourth, the researcher provides suggestions for the integration of research findings into practice for college and university staff members that manage similar programs.

Connections to Existing Literature

Each of the research questions investigated was grounded in existing research in the fields of co-curricular service learning or alternative spring breaks. All of the findings can be linked back either to one of these fields or to an identified gap in the literature that has not yet been addressed by research.

Research question 1. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the pre-trip education component of the experience? Both the qualitative and quantitative analyses yielded significant findings.

Past program involvement. Past involvement in a similar program had a positive influence on students' outcomes as measured by the faith subscale of the *ABPS*, with change scores following the pre-trip education component of the program being significantly higher than those for students who had not previously participated.

These findings may indicate that there is a distinct advantage to multiple service immersion experiences with respect to students' willingness to take action on their faith values. One explanation for this result is that faith development is a more rigid construct than the commitment and knowledge constructs. Evaluating and, if appropriate, making changes to a personal faith or values system may take a greater amount of time, effort, and persuasion through personal and shared experiences, education, and reflection. First time program participants may either be overwhelmed by the content of the pre-trip educational component or, alternatively, may not take the content seriously and deem it worthy of consideration. In either case, the result is that they do not immediately consider changes to their faith systems, but require a subsequent experience to explore its implications on their lives and faith. Numerous researchers have noted that the duration and intensity of service have an impact on student outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; and Mabry, 1998).

Gender and prior level of service involvement. Male students who indicated a low level of past service involvement had a significantly higher change score on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* than female students with the same past level of service involvement.

This interaction poses some interesting questions about the differing nature of faith development for men and women, but also how it is influenced by service activities

and academic or issue-based content. These findings may indicate that of the students who had previously been involved in limited or no service activities, men more easily adjust their belief systems and take action of their faith commitments than women. A basis for this conclusion may be found in Fowler's Stages of Faith Development (1981).

Fowler outlines five stages through which individuals move to discover their faith belief systems. Of most relevance are the third and fourth stages during adolescence and young adulthood. During the third stage, adolescents begin to develop higher cognitive functions and these skills help them start to find deeper meaning in the stories and myths they have learned, but they are heavily influenced by others' view and this stage is characterized by a conformist approach to religiosity. The fourth stage, by contrast, sees individuals start to form their own sense of identity and discover personal meaning in the stories they have been taught; it is the "demythologizing" stage where literal translations are replaced by conceptual meaning. Das and Harries (1996) continued this work on college students, probing for differences in faith development by gender. They sought to confirm Fowler's assertion that most college students were at stage 4, with some at stages 3 and 2. They concluded that significantly more men reached stage 4 than women during this time frame.

Likewise, these earlier findings by Das and Harries (1996) could support an alternative conclusion. The findings of the present study may be indicative of the application of new issue-based knowledge to faith development. One interpretation is that exposure to this new information during pre-trip education "shocks the conscience" and men react with an immediate reconsideration of a more pliable faith systems; this is contrasted by a more measured approach to knowledge integration utilized by women,

even when faced with the same shocking conditions. With both possible conclusions, it is not necessarily true that men fully develop their faith identity more quickly than women; instead, they progress to and through stage 4 at different rates. The conclusions drawn do not support any additional conclusions regarding full development through stage 5.

Prior level of service involvement and past program involvement. For students with either high or low levels of past service involvement, those who had prior involvement in a similar program had significantly higher change scores on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* than those for whom this was a first-time experience with ASB.

This interaction again considers students' past level of service involvement, but now in light of their prior involvement in a similar program, and how they impact faith development during the pre-trip education component of the program. As previously discussed, there are conclusions that reasonably can be drawn from the impact of past program involvement on faith development. The interaction with prior level of service involvement, however, creates a unique split between those that had self-reported high or low levels of previous service involvement and those with average levels of involvement. It is important to note that the self-reporting of prior service involvement may itself be a complicating factor in the conclusions that can be drawn from this set of findings.

For those who report a low level of service involvement, it is necessary to acknowledge a corresponding lower levels of knowledge of and experience with social issues and community-based work. It was not surprising that those who had minimal experience with community service reconsidered their place in the world and took notice of the moral imperative to take action. For this particular group, a change in faith as a

result of the pre-trip education component of the program could be seen as a normal stage of moral development and/or faith identity. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development support that adolescents and young adults are progressing through a number of changes that are a result of norms being challenged; it is through exposure to new situations and challenges that individuals can confront their preconceived notions of morality and faith.

For those students identifying a high level of prior service involvement, the findings present another interesting scenario. One explanation of the interaction between level of prior service experience and past program involvement may involve the types of service experiences in which they had previously been engaged and the level of issue-based education included in that service. Cooper (2002) notes in his study of community service, curricular service-learning, and co-curricular service-learning that students engaged in community service tended to have less insights into the root causes of problems, because they did not always engage in educational content related to the social issues.

Focus group interview conclusions. Overall, students made few references to the pre-trip education component of the program during the focus group interviews. This absence of references in the student narratives is a notable finding to be considered in drawing conclusions about the pre-trip education component. Given the timing of the focus group interviews, which occurred approximately a month after the trips returned from their service, there may be some measure of participants only remembering the most recent component of the experience. Howard and Kahana (1999) note the tendency of young adults to remember the most recent items or experiences in a free recall. Alternatively, participants may not be able to disambiguate lessons learned from discrete

program components. Kazdin (2001) notes that when conducting assessments, it is important to consider the timing; for more accurate results, it is critical that the assessment occur shortly after intervention of interest. Additionally, following a lag period, learners may not be able to reflect accurately on self-perceptions of their learning in relation program components versus the entire experience. Both of these conclusions are supported by the findings from the survey results that demonstrate changes occurring as a result of the pre-trip education component, but are not reflected in the focus group interviews.

Additionally, with no references to the faith construct, but significant findings related to this construct from the quantitative analysis, there appears to be a disconnect between the methodologies. This draws into question a possible discrepancy between the *timing* of the component and the *content* of the component. It is possible that rather than students' faith outcomes being influenced by the educational content of the pre-trip component, they were being influenced by other activities that occurred simultaneously and outside of the framework for study. For example, students are asked to request donations from friends, family members, and supporters as part of the program's fundraising efforts. As part of this process, participants are asked to actively reflect on their motivations to serve so that they may articulate this to others. This activity alone may provide an opportunity for students to achieve outcomes related to faith development that are measured by the *ABPS*, but not actively referenced in focus group interviews.

Research question 2. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring

break program participants through the trip-based service, education, and reflection components of the experience? There were significant findings as part of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Gender and past program involvement. Male students who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly higher change score on both the knowledge and commitment subscales of the *ABPS* than male students who had not previously been involved in a similar program. Conversely, female students who had previously been involved in a similar program had a significantly lower change score on both the knowledge and commitment subscales of the *ABPS* than female students who had not previously been involved in a similar program.

This interaction between gender and past program involvement has multiple facets that allow for multiple conclusions to be drawn from the data. One overarching explanation for this reciprocal relationship may be tied to differing lengths of exposure to conditions required by men and women in order to create change. If, as Fitch (1987) suggested, women are more immediately impacted than men by service experiences, their change scores would be greater than men in the first year of participation and then less than men in subsequent years. At the same time, men may require more "repeated exposure" to achieve the same goals as women over multiple programs with respect to the commitment and knowledge constructs.

Commitment to take action. Gender and past program involvement intersect with the *ABPS* commitment construct in a manner that result in different outcomes from the trip component for men and women. One possible explanation is that male participants take a greater amount of time to determine concrete plans for the ways in which they will

continue their service engagement. Burns et al. (2008) examined the role that gender plays in Generation Y college students' decisions to volunteer and their findings may support this conclusion. Male participants may be more deliberative in their approach to service when they entered into an issue or community with which they were unfamiliar. Under this explanation, repeated direct exposure to both the community and the social issue through multiple trips would increase the comfort level of male participants and encourage deeper involvement.

Additionally, there could be connections to the ways in which males demonstrate leadership qualities, as one of the pieces of this construct is an element of engaging or leading others into service. A finding that men wait for greater experience before engaging in a leadership than women would seem to conflict with existing research in some fields. When viewed as a risk-taking activity, the willingness to take on a leadership role is viewed primarily as a male tendency (Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999), but this is also in the setting of positional leadership and formalized authority.

The conclusion drawn in the context of the present study is predicated on female participants making a greater commitment to engaging others, but this can take shape in a variety of informal settings. For example, by simply engaging others in conversation about service opportunities, program alumni can encourage them to take action on their personal commitments; this could be viewed as a leadership role or taking more direction action to motivate others, without any position of formal leadership.

Knowledge in action. The interaction between gender and past program involvement also results in different outcomes from the trip component for men and women with respect to the *ABPS* knowledge construct. The differences in outcomes from

this construct for the on-trip component may simply be that female participants reached a point of knowledge saturation after their first trip experiences. Female participants may have reported an immediate change in their ability to apply the knowledge they gained from their initial experiences on trips and then less change after subsequent trips or experiences. This would contrast with male participants who incrementally continued to gain more belief in their ability to apply knowledge after additional experiences. This finding is supported by differences in gender reported by Fitch (1987) with respect to the immediacy of impact from service experience. With a more immediate impact experienced by female participants it is possible to expect that they would exhibit a quicker integration of experiences into the academic domain.

Focus group interview conclusions. Students made few references to the on-trip experience component of the program during the focus group interviews. Some focus group comments cross-referenced the trip component with the prior program involvement attribute. Those who had not previously participated in a similar program made comments that linked to the "Commitment in Action through Service" construct and suggested that their experiences strengthened their commitment to act both as a result of positive emotions they associated with their service and through plans to serve in the future. The two comments from students who had previously participated in alternative spring break trips made comments that linked to the "Faith in Action Through Service" and "Commitment in Action Through Service" constructs. In the case of the former, the student reported a positive outcome associated with a strengthening of his personal faith development. For the latter, the student reported a positive outcome through a desire to further engage in related service.

As it was not possible to draw valid distinctions between the focus group participants based on gender, integration of these findings into the survey results is not possible for the interaction between gender and past program participation. Based on the focus group discussions, however, outcomes associated with trip component of the program included growth and development in the commitment construct for both those that had and those that had not previously participated in a similar program.

Research question 3. What influence do gender, semester standing, prior program involvement, and past level of service involvement have on the learning outcomes related to faith, knowledge, and commitment achieved by alternative spring break program participants through the entire experience (both pre-trip education and trip-based service, education, and reflection components)? There were no significant findings as part of quantitative analysis, but qualitative analysis did yield some results.

Survey conclusions.

Although the quantitative analysis found neither significant main effects nor significant interaction effects, some conclusions can be drawn based on the outcomes associated with the entire program. Based on results of the pre-trip component of the program, participants saw some growth related to the faith constructs. Additionally, based on the outcomes from the trip component of the program, participants saw some growth related to both the commitment and knowledge constructs. Over the course of the entire program, however, none of these outcomes were significant enough to show a difference. These findings are inconsistent with prior conclusions drawn from a wide range of literature related to service learning that support positive outcomes related to faith (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003 and Kyker, 2003). Previous studies on the

application of academic knowledge (Astin et al., 2000; Astin et al., 2006; Gray et al., 1998; and Gray et al., 1999) were also inconsistent with these findings of non-significance. Finally, the existing research on civic responsibility (e.g. Bigg Garubio, 1999, Astin et al., 2000; and Myers-Lipton, 1994) also breaks from the findings of the present study. These comparisons point to the possibility that the program as a whole may not have had any one particular impact on all participants, but that the components individual components were much more meaningful to students depending on the their personal attributes (gender, past program participation, and prior level of service experience).

Focus group interview conclusions. No students discussed the entire program component that referenced the "Faith in Service Through Action" construct during the focus group interviews, regardless of past program participation. Additionally, students who had previously participated in the program did not discuss the "Knowledge in Action Through Service" construct in connection with the entire program component. As noted earlier in the conclusions for research question 1, an absence of references in the student narratives is a notable finding to be considered in drawing conclusions for a variety of reasons.

In the context of this research question, the absence of references for some constructs is contrasted by references to others, so the omission takes on additional meaning. Students made several references to the entire trip component of the program during the focus group interviews, all of which cross-referenced with either the "Commitment in Action Through Service" or the "Knowledge in Action Through Service" construct and included a prior program involvement attribute. In light of these

references, the lack of references to the "Faith in Action Through Service" construct is less likely a recency effect, but a true disconnect between the construct and the component.

Those who had not previously participated in a similar program made comments that linked to the "Knowledge in Action through Service" construct and suggested that students' overall academic experience and ability to apply knowledge were enhanced. Specific examples of positive outcomes included a clarification of academic interests and a greater willingness to explore interdisciplinary approaches to problem solving.

Regardless of prior program involvement, students also made comments that linked to the "Commitment in Action through Service" construct and suggested that their service helped them gain a greater understanding of social issues through their service, get more deeply involved in the issue, and engage others in getting involved to help solve social problems. This conclusion is supported by several studies (e.g. Astin et al., 2000; Astin & Sax, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; and Astin, 2000) that examined participants understanding of communities and social issues following service-learning experiences.

Research question 4. What, if any, additional learning outcomes not currently measured by the *ABPS* may be achieved by alternative spring break program participants? Only a qualitative analysis was conducted for this question and it did yield some results.

Pre-trip education component. There was minimal support for results associated with the pre-trip education component of the program voiced in the focus group interviews, but one student noted the understanding she gained about the complexity of

the social issues as a result of this component. More important, however, is the absence of narrative around this theme.

This finding is inconsistent with research surrounding the need for academic content to be directly tied to the service experience as one of the critical elements of service learning (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Principles in both the field of service learning and the practice of alternative break programming support the inclusion of strong pre-experience education as critical to positive outcomes for student participants. Similar to the lack of findings for faith outcomes in the pre-trip component, the researcher concludes that there is a recency effect influencing the measurement of outcomes for this particular program component, giving the timing of the focus group interviews.

Trip component. For the on-trip experience component of the program, students connected their experiences to several broad categories, including "Community and Issue Understanding," "Service Observations," and "Personal Development and Reflection." Findings from this component emphasized the knowledge and understanding of the complex nature of issues gained by participation. These findings are consistent with the existing research surrounding knowledge acquisition and intercultural competence (e.g. Pascarella & Terezini, 2005 and Eyler & Giles, 1999). The researcher concludes that the participants' struggles to come to terms with new knowledge, as well as the complexity of that new knowledge, forced them to examine issues from multiple points of view. Through this process, students must re-examine their own biases and preconceived notions about others and the world around them.

They findings also suggested an increased ability in students to apply the knowledge to make decisions about their future, whether related to career aspirations or

continuing education. Consistent with the work of Niehaus (2012), participants overall did not indicate a desire to immediately change careers, but a greater desire to adapt their career path in a way that helped others. Niehaus' study also found that students found new ways to apply their academic knowledge through their major coursework. In light of the existing research, the researcher concludes that possibly students the students in this study were not prone to dramatic changes in life plans as a result of alternative break experiences, but seek to adjust existing plans in a manner that they perceive to have a greater future impact on community and societal needs.

Central to this future-directed component was the students' articulated connection to the people with whom they worked; the relationships forged with community members was a predominant theme is these narratives and shaped the experiences of students. These relationships also helped students translate their work from another community back to campus or their home communities. It was this sense of working with "others" that is echoed in existing literature and has been liked to several positive outcomes. The work of Eyler and Giles (1999) emphasizes the importance of diversity as a critical program component, because it helped decrease stereotypes about members of the communities in which students were serving. The notion of boundary crossing is also an important characteristic in experiences, because it encourages participants and others to meet in a place where community members can share more openly.

Full program. Finally, students made connections to nearly all of the same nodes noted for the full program as noted for the on-trip component of the program. As was previously noted, both due to the research design and due to the inability of students to disambiguate their learning and growth into the discrete program components, it is

difficult to identify specifically when growth occurred as a result of participation. The single greatest theme from this particular focus group interviews question, however, was the connection between negative observations and experiences and a positive service outlook.

There was a significant shift in the student voice that moved from negative to positive and was noted when participants reflected on their overall experience with the alternative spring break program. Despite what students perceived to be negative experiences or emotions (e.g. displays of bias, futility of service, and insurmountable problems), they expressed an air of optimism about their outcomes from their participation. They were able to confront others about instances of intolerance, understand the value derived (for both participants and communities) from a one-week project, and formulate long-term solutions to tackle large problems. The findings support exiting research tied to students' self-efficacy as it relates to their belief they can make a change in the world (e.g. Zafran, 2009; Jacoby, 1996; and Howard, 1993). Even when confronted with problems they perceived to be insurmountable, students grew to believe that their service made a difference, both for themselves and for the community members they served.

Limitations of Study

Despite all of the study's findings, there were some limitations that impacted the conclusions that could be drawn as well as the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. These limitations were results of both design and the quality of archival data utilized for the study. Archival data utilized in the study were collected for the primary purpose of institutional program evaluation and assessment. Although still collected in a

manner that was appropriate to its original purpose, the data were insufficient to meet the needs of a more rigorous study.

One design limitation was that the institution studied utilizes the programmatic model of the "8 Components of a Quality Experience" from Break Away (2010). This model provides support for the best practices in the administration of co-curricular service-learning experiences through the alternative break model. A full explanation of the elements of this model is provided in Appendix B. Those institutions that do not utilize this model may find limited applicability of the findings, primarily due to the potential for reduced educational components.

A second design limitation was that the researcher played a dual role in the program. He was both an institutional program administrator and an institutional program evaluator at the time of data collection and interacted with both program participants and the student leaders of the program on a regular basis in a variety of contexts. As the program administrator, the researcher needed to address issues related to the program, including participant compliance with alternative spring break guidelines; as the program evaluator, the researcher attempted to impress on the program participants the importance of program assessment for the improvement of various activities. Participants may have perceived the researcher differently in these two roles and this may have limited their willingness to share experiences, whether positive or negative.

A third design limitation was that the focus group interviews conducted one month after return from trip, there were some limitations to the data gathered. With respect to the changes from each individual component of the program, participants were less likely to recall and identify elements included in their pre-trip education.

Additionally, there was insufficient time for participants to reflect on the impact the experience had on their lives. Future research would be well served by including additional focus group interviews in the week prior to departure for the trips, as well as six to twelve months following the return from experiences.

A first data limitation, broadly stated, was a small population. This limitation manifested in many ways that impacted the present study. Although the population of interest included 314 applicants to the program and response rates to the individual surveys were high, the consistent completion of multiple surveys was extremely low, particularly for those not accepted into the program. This resulted in some extremely small cell sizes that required collapsing categorical variables and limiting the findings of the research questions. This small sample size was also tied to the decision to exclude a control group as a point of comparison, due to the low response rate (approximately fifteen percent) from this group for the final survey.

A second data limitation is the accuracy of reported findings from the focus group interviews. While the survey utilized for the quantitative portion of the study included a social desirability scale to minimize the impact of participants inclined to answer in manner perceived as favorable, there is no such check on the qualitative data. It is possible that student participants responded to the prompts due to a belief they should have been impacted in a certain way. This belief could have arisen from discussions with past participants, student leaders, or program staff about what is frequently referenced as a transformational experience.

Implications of Findings

Despite these limitations, there are a number of implications that can impact the future of both research and practice in the areas of co-curricular service-learning and alternative spring break programming. Working in collaboration with researchers, practitioners can apply relevant findings to advance the learning outcomes that are sought from the integration of academic learning and community-based work.

Future research. This study examined some of the learning outcomes that could be measured by a validated instrument and explored through focus group interviews to start to bridge the findings between the co-curricular and curricular realms of service-learning. To accomplish this more fully, several lines of inquiry can be followed by future research in the area.

One program activity that should be disentangled from the trip components and studied separately is the element of reflection. This activity is woven throughout the experience and research has demonstrated that reflection plays a critical role in the learning, processing, and application of knowledge (Dubinsky, 2006). Reflection is a critical component of alternative break experiences and the study of student "meaning-making" conducted by Hui (2009) provides a framework that could be integrated into a larger study of the impact of reflection at different points in a program. Practitioners routinely integrate reflective activities into each component of alternative spring break programs, but the piece most commonly examined occurs immediately following service (e.g. daily communal reflections and personal or communal journal entries). Further benefit could be gained from understand the impact of pre-service reflective activities

(i.e. values clarification exercises) and long-term post-service activities (i.e. one-year anniversary gatherings).

Another element, reorientation, helps participants share and process their experiences in a manner that can assist with the transition into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship. For this reason, it is included in Break Away's "8 Components of a Quality Experience" model. Activities are intended to encourage students to continue their volunteer efforts through deeper and more meaningful efforts, such as organizing others to act, serving on the board of directors of a non-profit organization, applying to a year of service program (i.e. AmeriCorps*VISTA), entering into public service as a civil servant or elected official, or fundraising for a meaningful cause. Rather than limiting study to the pre-trip education component and the trip component, this could potentially be an additional element that justifies long-term follow-up interviews. At the time focus group interviews had been conducted, there were few reorientation activities sponsored by the individual groups, limiting the impact of this component of the program.

Finally, efforts should be made to conduct test-retest reliability tests with some of the established scales for curricular service-learning. The Civic Participation, Self-efficacy Toward Service (Weber, Weber, Sleeper, & Schneider, 2004), Attitude Toward Helping Others (Webb, Green, & Brashear, 2000), and College Education's Role in Addressing Social Issues (Weber, Weber, & Craven, 2008) scales could be piloted with a sample of alternative spring break participants. This would provide for both a basis of comparison between curricular and co-curricular service learning and the reliability of these tests in an educational program without the classroom component. These efforts would be the next step in continuing research along the typologies outlined by Britt

(2012), particularly as they relate to a greater lifelong commitment to civic engagement and social justice.

Future practice. As a practitioner himself, the researcher has a vested interest in identifying implicactions that impact not only research but also program implementation by colleagues. These recommendations range from basic adjustments to the timing of components to the theoretical framework that informs administrators' discussions of alternative breaks with participants and student leaders.

Theoretical approach to alternative breaks. The work of organizations such as Break Away and the direct efforts of countless student leaders and staff administrators advance the academic learning and personal development of thousands of alternative spring break participants every year. As a programmatic model, however, the alternative spring break experience is necessarily limited in time to the short-term exposure of one-week service projects. When viewed through the lens of long-term student development, these activities may represent pivotal moments of understanding and empathy that lead to a lifelong commitment to social justice, but they are only a starting point.

Institutional programs routinely witness the progression of students from a first experience as a participant to a second experience as a student leader, but the students who are involved for three or four years are rare. If tangible outcomes of programs are to move beyond the short-term realm, more focus needs to be placed on concrete steps that advance program participants to the next stage of development. As discussed in the literature review, this particular programmatic model aligns with the skill-set practice and reflexivity typology and, to some extent, the civic values and critical citizenship typologies outlined by Britt. A long-term approach that embraces extensions of the

current programmatic model would allow for the subsequent experiences to mirror the social justice typology more closely. This would align with numerous findings that service experiences of greater duration and intensity have a greater impact on student development outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Mabry, 1998).

As institutions of higher education seek greater civic outcomes from undergraduate experiences, a theoretical approach that encourages deeper, more meaningful, and more academically well-informed experiences beyond one-week service projects is necessary. These experiences could take the form of long-term local projects, international service experiences embedded in study abroad, post-graduate service or research opportunities, and institutional post-baccalaureate service fellowships. Regardless of the form of these experiences, the guiding philosophy should be one not of personal service, but of public or systemic service that seeks to eradicate institutionalized inequity. This shift would align with the current literature related to service-learning typologies and moves the programmatic model of alternative spring breaks towards social justice activism.

Changes to pre-trip education component. Given the findings that indicated positive results associated with prior program involvement, as well as combinations of gender and past level of service experience, and prior program involvement and past level of service experience, there are several implications for practitioners related to the pre-trip education component. Since those who had not previously participated in a similar program demonstrated greater outcomes in faith development change scores, but were not able to articulate this change through the focus group interviews, program designers may wish to incorporate deliberate changes related to the exploration of faith and spirituality

in relation to service. It was clear through the quantitative data that participants demonstrated a high variability associated with faith-based outcomes, but with those for whom it was an important element, additional guidance and support could be provided. In particular, this support could come in the form of deliberate programmatic connections between reflection and personal faith activities (e.g. prayer, guidance from spiritual advisors, and communal religious activities); these do not need to be part of program activities, but participants can be guided to seek them out as a form of reflection. Even minor adjustments, such as an invited speaker or panel of spiritual leaders, could help students make the connection between their motivations to serve and a religious calling.

Additionally, the intersectionality of gender and past level of prior experience poses some interesting programmatic options. Depending on the size and scale of a program, there may be the opportunity to provide group engagement activities that are based in participant characteristics, rather than trip selection. For example, a guided discussion following a common reading could be divided into smaller groups that separate by gender. If, as the findings support, male students who indicated a low level of past service involvement had a significantly higher change score on the faith subscale of the *ABPS* than female students with the same past level of service involvement, then gender-based groups could engage in different conversations surrounding faith and service.

Finally, the interaction between prior program involvement and past level of prior experience could lead to changes in the pre-trip training provided to student leaders in the program. While students returning to the program for second or subsequent service years included both trip leaders and participants, by focusing on trip leaders, program

administrators may be able to maximize the outcomes associated with these more experience students. Exercises that explore various personal conceptions of service (e.g. blood donation, military service, voting, direct service, philanthropy, or adoption) could be utilized to demonstrate the multiple facets of service involvement and show commonality between those with different levels of prior service experience. These discussions could lead to the use of the pre-trip education component with their trip participants as a starting point for a reflection on the personal impact of their prior service and help make connections to the issue-based education content.

In addition to supporting the growth of students through the pre-trip education component of the program, these approaches also recognize that the faith development that is purported to occur may result from the actual content of the program, as well as the timing of the activities in the course of normal student identity development.

Changes to trip experience component. In addition to changes that could be implemented during the pre-trip component of the program, there are also ways that changes to the actual trip itself could be modified by practitioners. Gender and past program involvement interact in a manner that crosses two of the constructs measured by the ABPS, commitment to take action and knowledge, during the trip component of alternative spring break experiences. These interactions present different ways in which program administrators may adapt programs to achieve alternative outcomes.

With respect to the civic commitment, practitioners could spend more time specifically focused on the external aspects of commitment, such as the commitment to engaging peers in service. For many program alumni in the present study, the motivation to engage in a subsequent leadership role was the desire to provide the same experience

to others. When taken into consideration those that have previously been involved in similar programs, program managers may want to focus their efforts on the leaders, who are actively seeking out multiple opportunities for engagement.

At the outset of the process for the selection of student leaders, program staff should consciously be considering the gender composition of leadership teams. While the goal transcends gender equity across the trip leader role, the findings of the present study suggest a need for a greater understanding about the interaction between gender and prior program experience (having previously participated in an alternative spring break). When determining selection criteria for program leaders, program staff must acknowledge that male and female program veterans may not articulate the learning outcomes they achieved in the same ways. Additionally, care must be taken not to eliminate female applicants (or advantage male applicants) that do not have any prior program participation.

Taking the knowledge construct into consideration during the trip phase, program designers may want to create deliberate opportunities for leaders to showcase methods of applying the learning gained during alternative spring break trips. In particular, a greater modeling of successful endeavors by female program alumni may model greater engagement for other female participants. By engaging alumnae from the university that live, work, or serve in the communities to host groups and apply the knowledge gained on their own trips, student leaders can forge a greater connection between an on-going commitment to service and importance of academic knowledge gained through program participation.

Changes to program assessment and evaluation. Finally, there are some implications for practice that stretch beyond the more immediate changes to program content and design. At a basic level, practitioners need to become more engaged with research that moves beyond program evaluation of trip logistics and seek to have a greater understanding of the importance of program and participant characteristics that add or detract from the student learning experience. These changes are intimately tied to the implications for future research, but not all practitioners have the training or inclination to engage in research. This does not preclude collaborative work that both aids program development and contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding alternative spring break programming and co-curricular service-learning. Professional organizations can play a greater role in identifying researchers and connecting them with practitioners in a way that advances the work of both.

Summary

The conclusions drawn from the findings of this study demonstrate the constructs of "Knowledge in Action Through Service," "Commitment in Action Through Service," and "Faith in Action Through Service" each play a role in the development of student participants and leaders, but during different phases of the program and based on different student characteristics. In particular, gender, prior program participation, and prior level of service commitment each have some influence over the outcomes associated with the constructs during the pre-trip education and trip experience components of the trip. While there does not appear to be one consistent outcome for all participants across these constructs as a result of the full program, there are measurable changes that can influence both future research and practice.

Inconsistent results from both the survey data and the focus group interviews point not necessarily to irreconcilable findings but, rather, to participants' varying abilities to identify the learning they associate with discrete program components. Through future research that seeks to disentangle further these program components, practitioners will be able to strengthen the learning outcomes achieved by all participants.

Additionally, practitioners should place a greater emphasis on the long-term outcomes associated with alternative spring break programming. This should be accomplished through a combination of long-term program assessment and evaluation (longitudinal studies) with new programming models. In order to align this field of programming with the social justice service-learning typology, there needs to a concerted effort in the field to extend the one-week experiences into long-term outcomes. This will require the efforts of not only practitioners but also institutions of higher education to invest in programs that require a greater time commitment, more funding, and possibly alternative opportunities that extend outside the traditional four-year plan for the undergraduate experience.

While some of the outcomes achieved by alternative spring break participants are effectively measured by the *ABPS*, the study conclusions also support that there are additional constructs beyond the scope of this instrument. As an exploratory study with respect to research question four, it is not surprising that participants articulate these additional learning outcomes. It is interesting, however, that the students do not necessarily identify the learning achieved as associated with the discrete program components. Rather than looking at the outcomes as a result of a larger, more holistic program, researchers and practitioners should focus future efforts on more accurately

connecting the components to the learning outcomes through more structured and frequent research on the components.

There are still many unanswered questions in this field of research, but the conclusions drawn from this study identify the significant benefits accrued by alternative spring break participants. Students achieve positive developmental outcomes across several dimensions and there is the possibility to expand them. Additional investments from institutions of higher education, professional organizations, and individual researchers/practitioners are crucial to the advancement of understanding in this field.

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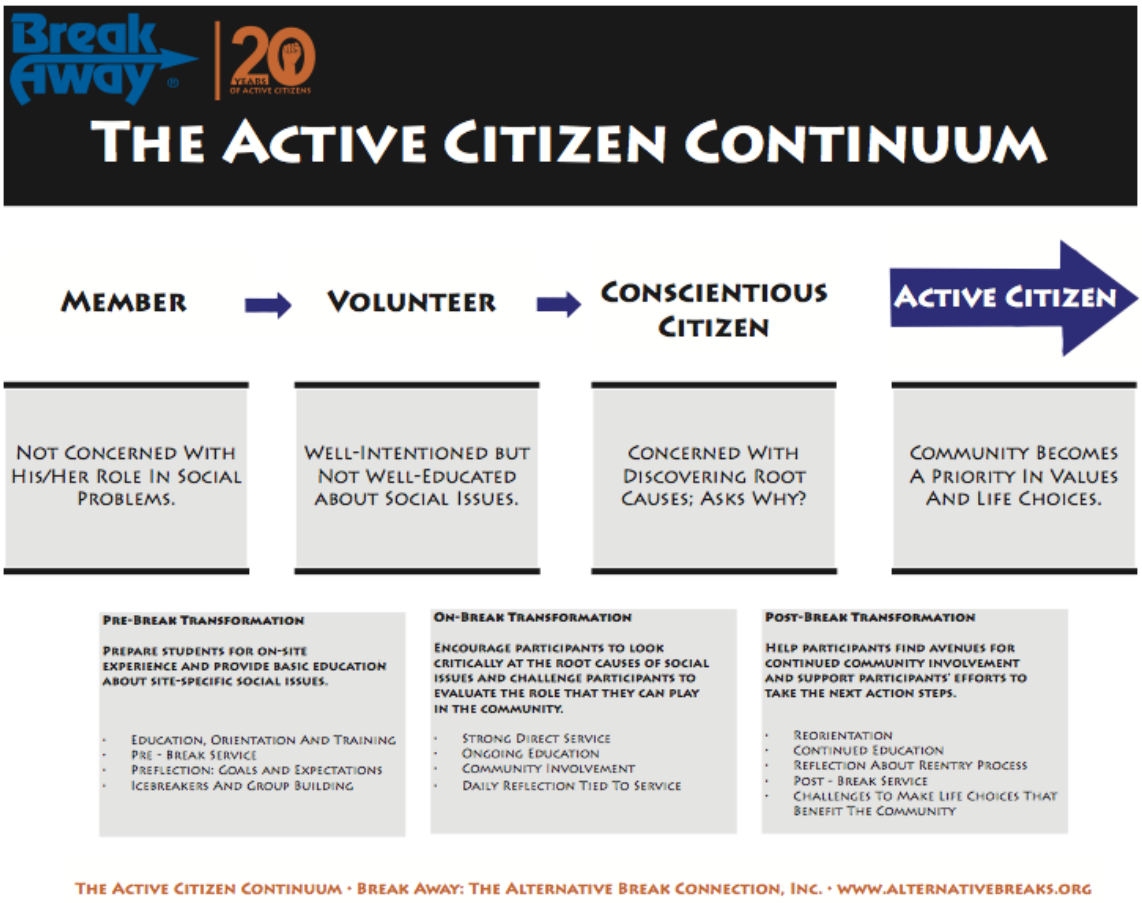
Appendix A

Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum



4

[4] Source: http://www.alternativebreaks2012.org/philosophy

Appendix B

Break Away's "8 Components of a Quality Experience"

Strong Direct Service: Programs provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or "hands-on" projects and activities that addresses critical but unmet social needs, as determined by the community. Community interaction during service projects and throughout the week is highly encouraged during breaks.
Orientation: Prior to departure, participants should be oriented to the mission and vision of the community partner or organization(s) with which they are working. Participants are encouraged to look at the context of the work of the organization within the broader community and to become allies to their mission and vision through direct service.
Education: Programs include issue specific educational sessions that participants attend prior to and during their alternative break. These sessions provide participants with the historical, political, social, and cultural context of the social problems they will be working with during the break. Education provides opinions from all perspectives on the issue, including ways that the participants' personal life choices are connected to them.
Training: Participants are provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training should take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site. Examples of training include teaching basic construction, learning how to read with children or gaining first aid skills.
Reflection: During the trip, participants reflect on the experiences they are having - synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components. They may apply classroom learning and integrate many academic disciplines. Site leaders should set aside time for reflection to take place, both individually and in a group setting.
Reorientation: Upon return to campus, programs carry out reorientation activities for all participants where they can share their break experiences and translate them into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship. Through these activities, participants continue their volunteer efforts in their local area, learn about possible internships, engage politically in their community, obtain resources for continued education on social issues, and make life choices that benefit the entire community.
Diversity: Strong alternative break programs include participants representing the range of students present in the campus community. Coordinators should recruit, design, implement, and evaluate their program with this end in mind. Break programs should also plan to intentionally address the issue of diversity and social justice, or in other words privilege and oppression, and how it relates to service work.
Alcohol and Other Drug Free: Programs must be aware that issues of legality, liability, personal safety, and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Programs provide training on alcohol and other drug related issues as well as develop a policy on how these issues will be addressed.

[5]

[5] Source: Adapted from http://www.alternativebreaks2012.org/philosophy/8components/

Appendix C

Alternative Break Participant Survey (*ABPS*)

Thank you for your interest in the 2013 Alternative Spring Break program!

With the participant application deadline having passed, we are now asking all applicants to participate in a survey to help improve our understanding of the learning outcomes from the Alternative Spring Break program. Your answers on this survey will not impact your selection for any of the trips. Please take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey and submit it before 5:00pm on Thursday, November 8.

This survey will be repeated again:

1) One week prior to spring break (only for trip participants); and
2) Two weeks after spring break (for all applicants).

During April, some participants and Site Leaders will be randomly selected and asked to participate in interviews related to experiences on their Alternative Spring Break trips.

Should you have any questions about the content of this survey, please contact Mac Griswold, Director of the Community Involvement Center, by e-mail (griswold@rice.edu) or phone (713-348-6163).

Part 1: Part 1 of 3 - Demographic Information	
Create your unique identifier that will allow these and future responses to be matched for comparison, while also allowing your responses to remain anonymous. To create your identifier, combine the following elements: 1) Two-digit day of your birth; 2) Last four digits of student (or employee, if faculty/staff) ID; and 3) Two-digit day of your mother's birth. For example, an identifier of "03327511" would be created from the following information: 1) Your date of birth: February 03, 1989; 2) Student ID: S01173275; and 3) Mother's date of birth: October 11, 1960.	Enter your identifier: ____
Your unique identifier is crucial to matching future responses to this survey. Please confirm your identifier was created correctly by following the example above and re-enter it.	Enter your identifier: ____
Gender:	Female Male Other Gender Identity
University Standing:	First Year Undergraduate Student Second Year Undergraduate Student Third Year Undergraduate Student Fourth Year Undergraduate Student Fifth Year Undergraduate Student Graduate Student Faculty/Staff Member

Have you previously participated in any of the following programs of the Community Involvement Center? Urban Immersion, International Service Project to Guatemala, Alternative Spring Break, or Loewenstern Fellowship	Yes No
Compared to your peers, what do you consider your level of prior service involvement?	High Average Low

Part 2: Part 2 of 3	
I am able to apply academic learning from courses to solve community problems.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I am able to explain academic theory I have learned in classes in the context of my community work.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
Others see me as a resource for news in my community.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I frequently discuss social problems with my friends.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I try to formulate solutions to social problems in my community.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

I sometimes litter.	True False
I always admit my mistakes openly and face the potential negative consequences.	True False
In traffic I am always polite and considerate of others.	True False
I always accept others' opinions, even when they don't agree with my own.	True False
I take out my bad moods on others now and then.	True False
There has been an occasion when I took advantage of someone else.	True False
In conversations I always listen attentively and let others finish their sentences.	True False
I never hesitate to help someone in case of emergency.	True False
All people should volunteer to help the community.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I am certain that I will volunteer in my community in the future.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I encourage others to get involved in solving community problems.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I am personally committed to helping other people in need in my community.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I am interested in learning about the diverse backgrounds of the people I meet.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

Part 2: Part 2 of 3	
When I have made a promise, I keep it -- no if's, and's, or but's.	True False
I occasionally speak badly of others behind their back.	True False
I would never live off other people.	True False
I always stay friendly and courteous with other people, even when I am stressed out.	True False
During arguments I always stay objective and matter-of-fact.	True False
There has been at least one occasion when I failed to return an item that I borrowed.	True False
I always eat a healthy diet.	True False
Sometimes I only help because I expect something in return.	True False
I try to apply my faith to solving social issues in my community.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I feel driven by my faith to reduce the suffering of others.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I feel a higher power's presence in my interactions serving other people.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
I seek out opportunities to increase my faith through service.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree
My faith regularly guides my actions.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocols and Questions

Thank you for participating in this focus group interview for the 2013 Alternative Spring Break program. The data collected through these interviews will be used as part of the Community Involvement Center's program evaluation process to help better understand the learning and development achieved by participants in the program.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to leave the session at any time if you wish to discontinue your involvement. Lunch is provided as a convenience since we're holding this session over the noon hour, but no other compensation is offered. It is expected that these questions will result in neither harm nor discomfort to you. Should you experience any emotional distress following this session, please contact me and I can arrange a referral to an appropriate counseling resource.

As mentioned in the recruitment e-mails, audio and video devices will record these sessions in order to maintain an accurate record of your feedback. Following this introduction, I will ask you to identify yourself for the recording devices with the information on the card in front of you. This includes an identifier for the session (i.e. number 1), gender, and past participation in the alternative spring break program (first time or past participant). During the course of the session, I ask that you not identify other participants in either this session or the program by their names.

I will follow up with some participants to conduct some "member checking" to ensure a thorough understanding of the contents of the session. Following the transcription of the session and participant member checking, both the audio and video files will be deleted, as well as the names and e-mail addresses of participants, in order to ensure anonymity of participant responses.

For the purpose of ensuring consent to participate, I ask that you each acknowledge this information and verbally agree to participating and to the recording of the session.

One of the specific goals we hope to achieve in the Alternative Spring Break is for participants to <u>gain the ability</u> or <u>strengthen their existing ability</u> to take action on a social issue of importance to them. My first question is very general in nature and then we will go into more specific questions about one particular area of interest. *Your answers do not necessarily have to be related to the social issue you addressed on your trip. Some questions may not apply to you or your experiences resulting from participation. It is appropriate to respond that the question may not apply to you or you have not had an opportunity to reflect on that aspect of the experience.*

1. In what ways have you <u>taken action</u> or do you <u>intend to take action</u> in your life as a result of your involvement in the alternative spring break program?

Focus Group 1 - "Commitment in Action" Questions

1. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change your own personal commitment to address social issues?

2. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change the ways in which you encourage others to address social issues?

3. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change the ways in which you seek out information about social issues in your community?

Focus Group 2 - "Knowledge in Action" Questions

1. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change the way you think about applying past academic work to address social issues?

2. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change the direction of potential future academic work to address social issues?

3. Describe a way in which you could apply your own academic research or design work could be used to address a social issue in your community.

Focus Group 3 - "Faith in Action" Questions

As an introduction to the terminology used in the following questions, please consider the following:

"[Faith] is the positive human response to the issues raised by spirituality and by religion. . . [It is the] positive human potential for responding with trust . . . in order to advance his or her spirituality. . . We may speak of faith without religion but not religion without faith" (Hull 1999). Your participation or lack of participation in organized religious practices/rituals or belief in a higher power or deity may be part of your faith, but you may also consider these questions from other perspectives.

1. In what ways was your decision to get involved in the alternative spring break program guided by your faith to address social issues?

2. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program change the ways in which you currently act on your faith or plan to take future faith-based action to address social issues?

3. In what ways did your involvement in the alternative spring break program impact your decisions to address social issues as a means of increasing your faith?
